

**Who am I? I am I - Ultimate
Existential Reality Answer;
Vedanta; God and Science
conversation**

**iami1.wordpress.com
blog book**

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**Some time ago I heard some group sing,
"Love is the answer; Now, what was the question?"
What a Mahavaakya (Great pithy statement)! Perhaps it is at the level of the Great Upanishadic Mahavaakyas like Thath Thwam Asi (You are That).**

In spiritual posts, mention of contemporary spiritual leaders is avoided as the attempt is to emphasize spiritual teachings/paths/philosophy/knowledge which may be viewed as universal though the Hindu way of expressing them is used. It must also be mentioned that a few posts are specific to Hinduism.

"I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness." - Max Planck

"Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve." - Max Planck

The God and Science conversation posts may be helpful to scientists and technologists from any religious tradition - Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, etc. - to courageously counter ridicule of their belief in God from some atheist top scientists and technologists.

Author Ravi S. Iyer is a blogger/social media writer on spirituality and religion. He is a Physics graduate from Ruia college, University of Bombay (Mumbai), and a retired international software consultant (software technologist).

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Who am I? I am I - Ultimate Existential Reality Answer; Vedanta; God and Science conversation

iami1.wordpress.com blog book

Ravi S. Iyer

This blog book has posts/articles on spirituality and on God and Science from iami1.wordpress.com blog of Ravi S. Iyer. The key areas addressed are:

- Who am I? I am I. The Ultimate Answer to THE Existential Reality Question
- Belief in God that is Compatible with Science
- Contemporary (early 21st century) God and Science Conversation

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* About Sri Sathya Sai Baba and more: ravisiyer.blogspot.com

* Existential reality, Vedanta and God & science conversation: iami1.wordpress.com

* Indian CS & IT Academic Reform Activism: eklavayasai.blogspot.com/p/table-of-contents.html

* Course material related to computer programming (software lab.) courses: raviiyerteaches.wordpress.com

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Service to Society is Service to God

Contents

This book is NOT FOR PROFIT for author	7
Permission to freely reuse MY CONTENT of this book	9
CC-BY-SA (additional) license for few pages in this book	11
Preface	13
About Ravi S. Iyer	15
I am I	17
Divine revelation gems from Chandogya Upanishad: Chapter 6 (Dialogue between Uddalaka and Svetaketu)	19
Crisp Statements of Belief in God that is Compatible with Science	32
One can be a Rigorous Scientist and a Believer in God – Dr. Francis Collins	38
God vs. Science, TIME, Nov. 2006, Dr. Collins – a standard bearer for scientists who believe in God	45
Some Famous Scientists' Views on God and Limits of Science	48
Burden of Proof Argument for Existence of God	57
Existential Intelligence & Other Human Intelligences	61
Does Presence of Pain and Suffering Imply That There is No God?	64
Is Believing in a Personal God Childish?	66
Praying Openly While Doing a PhD	68

Epicurean Paradox – A Hindu Take	69
What I am Joyful about Being a Hindu	71
“The God Delusion”. What Does it Really Mean?	75
Ignorant Prof. Dawkins Declares to CNN that on Death, It Just Ends!	80
Wrong Science Being Taught in Some Faith Schools	84
Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist	88
Why I shy away from comparisons between Physics theories like Higgs field and deep spiritual philosophy like Vedanta?	108
Has Science Refuted Religion Debate	116
Non-Scientific Knowledge Detection Kit – not Baloney Detection Kit!	118
Fantastic Espousal of the Good of Religion by Honourable Mr. Tony Blair in Nov. 2010 Debate	121
List of some other posts of iami1.wordpress.com	125

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April 2018

Ravi S. Iyer

Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, India

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April 2018

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The following articles/posts in this book use significant amount of text extracts from Wikipedia and Wikiquote:

- 1) Some Famous Scientists' Views on God and Limits of Science
- 2) Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist
- 3) Why I shy away from comparisons between Physics theories like Higgs field and deep spiritual philosophy like Vedanta?

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Preface

This book is based mainly on all the iami1.wordpress.com blog post content which is authored mainly by this author (Ravi S. Iyer) but has contributions from others too.

The document has posts on spiritual matters and also captures my humble exploration of and views on the God & Science conversation.

When teachings of religions or miracles mentioned in Holy Scripture are referred, very limited or no mention is made of any contemporary or near-contemporary religious leaders/founders - the attempt is to emphasize spiritual teachings/paths/philosophy/knowledge which may be viewed as universal though the Hindu way of expressing them is used. It must also be mentioned that a few posts are specific to Hinduism.

I have written some of these posts in a hurried way. Further, I have not had the time to spell check and grammar check all the content in this book (and also the blog posts which form the source content for this book). I request the reader's kind indulgence for spelling and grammar mistakes in this book. My emphasis has been on getting the basic message across even if the language is not without unintentional errors which may irritate some readers but I don't think will come in the way of them understanding what I have written. I also have not spent any time on polishing the language in this book.

At times, my usage of uppercase first letters for some words may be inappropriate. I have chosen not to correct them as at the time I composed some of the posts in the years 2011 to

2013 or so, I was very intensely involved in understanding and discussing the topics covered in those posts. The uppercase choice for first letters of some words were my way then of providing emphasis. I don't want to disturb what I had written then even though I realize that some such usage of uppercase for first letter of word is incorrect English language usage. But then the Internet does have a fair bit of incorrect English language usage and so I did not feel odd or lonely while I used that style in some of my posts then 😊.

About Ravi S. Iyer

Last updated on 11th April 2018

I (author of this document/book based on my [iami1](https://iami1.wordpress.com) blog) am just a spiritual journeyman enjoying my spiritual journey.

I thought I could share some of my spiritual journey views with interested folks on the net and so this small website and blog.

Initially (till sometime around the beginning of 2014) I preferred to be anonymous as I thought that would allow for freer expression of sensitive views. I guess now I am comfortable with expressing the views of the type expressed here under my real name.

My name is Ravi S. Iyer and I am a blogger/social media writer on spirituality and religion. I am a Physics graduate from Ruia college, University of Bombay (Mumbai), and a retired international software consultant, living in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh, India.

My spirituality and religion blogs

1) This blog, <https://iami1.wordpress.com>, is a humble exploration of and views on the God & Science conversation (done after August 2011), and little more. When teachings of religions or miracles mentioned in Holy Scripture are referred, as far as I recall, no mention is made of any contemporary or near-contemporary religious leader/founder – the attempt is to emphasize spiritual teachings/paths/philosophy/knowledge which may be viewed as universal though the Hindu way of

expressing them is used. It must also be mentioned that a few posts are specific to Hinduism.

2) <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.com> is a blog about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and other spiritual & religious matters.

For more about me including my software related blogs please visit: <http://ravisiyer.blogspot.in/p/about-ravi-s-iyer.html>.

Above content is based on this webpage:

<https://iamil.wordpress.com/about/>

I am I

First posted around Sept. 2011

Who am I?

This is THE Great Existential Question of man.

Great Spiritual Masters and Sacred Scripture tell us:

Koham? Soham.

Who am I? I am He.

Some put it differently. They say:

Who am I? I am I.

AS SIMPLE AS THAT!!!

But it is simple only from an intellectual appreciation, thinking 'head' point of view. To REALLY UNDERSTAND IT one has to understand from the 'feeling' heart, from the 'feeling' depth of one's being, in the unchanging still awareness of our 'feeling' existence.

In fact, if the understanding is only intellectual then it can be viewed as a ridiculous statement and dismissed out-of-hand as something meant only for idiots & fools who are blinded by their beliefs. The ultimate answer to existence then can get grotesquely misunderstood.

The 'feeling' heart understanding may take months and years and decades and even multiple lifetimes, they say! Taming

Desire in general and Lust in particular (Kaama), Anger (Krodha), Greed (Lobha), Infatuation (Moha), Pride (Madha) & Jealousy (Maatsarya) comes first. That ensures a calm beingness, a nearly thoughtless but ‘feelingful’ / ‘beingful’ state which allows one to unravel and disentangle the Body-Mind-Ego Delusion from one’s existential reality. Then and then alone comes REAL UNDERSTANDING, they say.

That, they say, is the spiritual journey to the reality of not only one’s existence but that of ALL EXISTENCE which is projected from the depths of our own being. They vehemently say, contemptuous of the ignorant and dismissive disbelief of most materialists and most material scientists, that this ultimate existential reality IS NOT OUTSIDE US in the outer/sensory material universe but within the depths of our own being. And the time taken for this journey to our spiritual center, they say, varies widely from person to person.

And some Great Masters say that at the very depth of our being we are Pure Love!!! That’s it, they say. Nothing else exists but Pure Love. And to reach that understanding, that existential experience, that enlightenment, they say, take the path of Service (Seva) with Pure Love (Nirmal / Nishkaam Prema).

Faith in these sacred statements goes a long way in unraveling the Great Illusion (Maha Maya) that we are trapped in. The other great virtue is Patience – Patience of a tall order – Patience of months and years and even lifetimes. Shraddha and Saburi i.e. Faith and Patience, they say, can lead one to the goal of direct experience of existential reality (Atma Saakshaatkaar).

They say, Practise Pure Love as much as you can to experience your existential truth, your SACRED REALITY as PURE LOVE. As simple as that!!! From Outer Expression of Pure Love to Inner Experience of Divine Love.

Some time ago I heard some group sing,

“Love is the answer; Now, what was the question?”

What a Mahavaakya (Great pithy statement)! Perhaps it is at the level of the Great Upanishadic Mahavaakyas like Thath Thwam Asi (You are That).

Above post's link: <https://iami1.wordpress.com/>

Divine revelation gems from Chandogya Upanishad: Chapter 6 (Dialogue between Uddalaka and Svetaketu)

Posted on April 8th 2018

Last updated on April 26th 2018

The Upanishads (also called Vedanta) are toward the end of the Vedas, the holy scripture of the Hindus. I must also say here that I am a Hindu. It is my fervent belief that these Upanishads contain wonderful gems of divine revelation about the mysteries of the universe and about divine power (formless God). Given below are some such wonderful gems of divine revelation from Chandogya Upanishad,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandogya_Upanishad.

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I have included extracts of Chandogya Upanishad from Prof. Max Muller's Sacred Books of East, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_Books_of_the_East, (spelt as Khândogya Upanishad in it) as that is in the public domain. It can be viewed from the index page here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01/index.htm>. I have used the term [MM, SBE] below to refer to Prof. Max Muller's above mentioned book.

Readers who would like to see the Sanskrit verses in Devanagari (Sanskrit) script of Chandogya upanishad can do so here:

<http://www.astrojyoti.com/pdfs/DevanagariFiles/ChandogyaUpanishat.pdf>. Note that Chapter 6 starts from pdf file page 50 but which has page number printed as 130 as the pdf file seems to be an extract from a larger file. I have also uploaded this pdf file on my blog here:

<https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/chandogyaupanishat-sanskrit.pdf> as Chandogya Upanishad Sanskrit text is in the public domain.

The shlokas (verses) below have the original Sanskrit verses in Roman (English) script followed by Max Muller, SBE English translation of it.

My comments on the shlokas (verses) below have been strongly influenced by a near-contemporary spiritual master's commentary on Chandogya Upanishad. As I want to emphasize spiritual teachings/paths/philosophy/knowledge which may be viewed as universal though I have used the Hindu way of expressing them, I have chosen not to mention the name of this near-contemporary spiritual master.

Chapter 6, Part 1

Verse 3: *Yenaashrutam shrutam bhavati amatham matham, avijnaatham vijnaatham iti katham nu bhagavah sa aadesho bhavathithi.*

[MM, SBE]: ('His father said to him: 'Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern,) have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?')

Verse 4: *Yathaa somya ekena mrt-pindena sarvam mrnmayam vijnaatham syaath vaachaarambhanam vikaaro naamadheyam mrttikethi eva sathyam.*

[MM, SBE]: ('What is that instruction, Sir?' he asked. The father replied:) 'My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay'

Verse 5: *Yathaa somya ekena lohamaninaa sarvam lohamayam vijnaatham syaath vaachaarambhanam vikaro namadheyam lohamithi eva sathyam.*

[MM, SBE]: And as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold

Ravi: My understanding of the above verses is that there is an underlying core being-ness (or existence-ness or is-ness) which is the vital aspect of all existence. It is this vital being-ness which is manifested in different ways and appears as the

universe to us. This being-ness cannot be easily known by gross intelligence. This being-ness can be known or realized by subtle intelligence.

Chapter 6, Part 2

Verse 1: *Sath eva somya idam agra aaseed ekam evadvithiyam, tadd haika aahuh, asad evedam agra aaseed ekam evadvithiyam, tasmaad asathah saj jaayatha.*

[MM, SBE]: ‘In the beginning,’ my dear, ‘there was that only which is (τὸ ὅν), one only, without a second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (τὸ μὴ ὅν), one only, without a second; and from that which is not, that which is was born.

Verse 2: *Kuthas tu khalu somya evam syaath ithi hovaacha katham asathah saj jaayethethi, sath thu eva somya idam agra aaseed ekam evadvithiyam.*

[MM, SBE]: ‘But how could it be thus, my dear?’ the father continued. ‘How could that which is, be born of that which is not? No, my dear, only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second.

Verse 3: *Tad aikshatha bahu syaam prajaayeyethi, thath thejo srjatha: thath thejo aikshatha bahu syaam prajaayeyethi, thad aposrjata, thasmaad yatra kva cha shochathi svedate vaa purushah thejasa eva tad adhy apo jaayante.*

[MM, SBE]: It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. And therefore whenever anybody

anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone.

Ravi: It is the being-ness (or existence-ness or is-ness) that was there even before creation of the universe. And it was one only, without a second. There was no void prior to creation. Only this being-ness was there. Creation of the universe happened as this one and only one being-ness thought or willed that it become many! That resulted in the great variety of creation but all of which has this being-ness as its vital core. *[I prefer not to comment on the fire and water part of the verse 3 above except for saying that I think it may be related to the understanding of ancient sages about material composition of the universe with fire and water being considered as key elements. I don't think these views of ancient sages about material composition of the universe are important from the perspective of understanding the key spiritual revelation message of the above verses.]*

In my earlier readings of this sixth chapter of Chandogya Upanishad, I had understood ‘the knowledge which if known, all things can be known’ to imply that a ‘self-realized’ person knows everything even about the material universe. So I thought that a self-realized person would, besides knowing his ultimate reality, also know about all physical sciences and about past, present and future of everybody including himself. But now my understanding is that Uddalaka tells Svetaketu that if you know the source (“being-ness” or “existence-ness” or “is-ness”) then you know the cause of the material universe and knowing the cause/source is the only important thing worth knowing. Perhaps it is like how when we are caught up in a ‘sleep’ nightmare dream we get very worried while in the

dream. But the moment we ‘wake up’ from the ‘sleep dream’ we realize that it was ‘just a dream’ and dismiss the ‘sleep dream’ experience. We then focus on the ‘waking dream’ experience as the only important thing worth worrying about.

So my understanding of ‘self-realization’ now is that the ‘self-realized’ person realizes that his reality is the changeless “being-ness” or “existence-ness” or “is-ness” which projects his changing personality, mind and body as well as this entire (changing) material universe drama. He then stays aware of that changeless “being-ness” reality (sometimes also referred to as changeless “awareness” or “consciousness”) and lives out his/her life as a ‘waking dream’. He is not really bothered about material knowledge like, say, the laws of physics as they deal with the changing ‘waking dream’ world and not the changeless reality (“being-ness”). Of course as he lives in the material world he does need to have some level of material knowledge so that he (his mind & body) can survive and, in some cases, thrive. [Nisargadatta ran a ‘Tambaku/Bidi’ (Tobacco/cigarette) shop in Mumbai and so must have been quite knowledgeable about tobacco besides being ‘self-realized’ :-)]. The self-realized perhaps look upon the world as the great Leela of the Lord and some of them, at least, may be enjoying this Great Play, this phenomenal and utterly wonderful creation that the Maya Shakti of the Lord has projected.

Further, IMHO, Ramana and Nisargadatta did not seem to have any knowledge about their own future let alone future of others. So once again, most ‘self-realized’ persons may just be watching their own mind, body and ‘material life’ go through various ups and downs but not getting affected by it as they are

aware of and established in their experience of the ultimate reality of their existence as the changeless “being-ness” (also referred to as unchanging consciousness).

Of course, some great siddhas (miraculous spiritual adepts) do have fantastic powers where they can do amazing things in the material world. And I believe that Avatars can do virtually anything and know virtually everything as they are Almighty God in human form specially endowed with Avatar supernatural powers. Devotees of the Lord can also, through their intense Bhakti, get the Lord to do amazing things/miracles. But many ‘Jnana’ marg (wisdom path) ‘self-realized’ persons like Ramana or Nisargadatta did not seem to possess or be even remotely interested in possessing ‘siddhis’ (miraculous powers).

This being-ness cannot be easily known by gross intelligence. This being-ness can be known or realized by subtle intelligence. I think this distinction between gross intelligence and subtle intelligence is crucial. This chapter (VI) of the Upanishad starts with Uddalaka pricking the puffed up ego of Svetaketu who thinks that by learning the Veda for many years (12 years perhaps) he has become very learned. This ‘gross intelligence’ learning pride balloon is burst when Uddalaka asks about the knowledge by which what is unknown gets known (6.1.3). Then Svetaketu becomes ready to receive the ‘subtle intelligence’ related knowledge (self-realization related knowledge) which Uddalaka imparts.

In the Jnana marg, unraveling the mind and eventually making it disappear, and thereby experiencing the “changeless being-ness” seems to need extremely subtle analysis of ‘experiential’/‘existential’ reality. That is very tricky business

as it usually would unravel one's material life as well :-). And most people are too comfy with their material lives to pursue the subtle analysis of 'experiential'/'existential' reality to that extent.

I guess people involved in family life/ regular material life ('samsara') would typically find it almost impossible to do subtle analysis of 'experiential'/'existential' reality as the pulls and pushes of family life/normal material life would not be conducive to creating a detached and serene mental space which seems to be necessary for such subtle analysis of one's reality. That may be why, in ancient days, the Upanishads (and the 'aranyakas') were ideally supposed to be read after withdrawing from 'samsara' and moving to the forest. However just moving to the forest alone would not guarantee serenity :-). Serenity may perhaps get achieved only after the arishadvargas (six passions, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arishadvargas>) of Kama (desire/lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (Greed), Moha (Infatuation/delusion), Mada (Pride/Arrogance) and Matsarya (Jealousy) are conquered or, at least, tamed.

Chapter 6, Part 8

Verse 1 *Uddaalako haarunih svethakethum puthram uvaacha svapnaantham me somya vijaanihithi, yathraithath purushah svapithi naama, sathaa somya tadaa sampanno bhavathi svam apitho bhavathi thasmaadenam svapithithy aachakshathe svam he apitho bhavathi.*

[MM, SBE]: Uddâlaka Âruni said to his son Svetaketu: Learn from me the true nature of sleep (svapna). When a man sleeps

here, then, my dear son, he becomes united with the True, he is gone to his own (Self). Therefore they say, svapiti, he sleeps, because he is gone (apîta) to his own (sva).

Ravi: My understanding of this is that while we are awake the being-ness (consciousness) seems to us to be limited to our mind-body complexes. But in sleep (or deep sleep rather) we lose our mind-body identifications and are closer to the pure being-ness (consciousness) state.

On the lighter side, now I have a ‘spiritual’ understanding of why I love and enjoy my sleep so much :-).

Chapter 6, Part 9

Verse 1 *Yathaa somya madhu madhukrto nisthishtanthi naanaathyayaanaam vrkshaanaam rasaaan samavahaarame kataam rasam gamaynthi.*

[MM, SBE]: ‘As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form,

Verse 2 *Te yathaa tatra na vivekam labhanthe amushyaaham vrkshasya rasosmi amushyaaham vrkshasya rasosmiti evam eva khalu somya imaah sarvaah prajaah sathi sampadya na viduh sathi sampadyaamaha ithi.*

[MM, SBE]: ‘And as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True (either in deep sleep or in death), know not that they are merged in the True.’

Verse 4 *Sa ya esho anima aithadaathmyam idam sarvam thath sathyam sa aathma thath thvam asi shvethaketho ithi bhuya*

eva maa bhagavaan vijnaapayatvithi thathaa somya ithi hovaacha.

[MM, SBE]: ‘Now that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.’ ‘Please, Sir, inform me still more,’ said the son. ‘Be it so, my child,’ the father replied.

Ravi: The ‘Thath thvam asi’ OR ‘Tat tvam asi’ Mahavakya comes from this Upanishad. The literal translations of these three words seems to be ‘You are that’. Like the other Mahavakyas, the full import is stunning, ‘You are (or your ultimate reality is) the subtle essence, the cause of all this world!!!’ Some mystics claim to have had such an experience of their reality, their truth. They experience that they are in others and that others are in them! What an awesome, mind-blowing and staggering experience that must be? I feel that there are degrees of self-realization. I know others may laugh but that’s how I feel as of now. The lesser degree is attained when a person realizes his “changeless being-ness” or “changeless is-ness”. But experiencing oneself in all and all in oneself seems to be a distinctly higher degree of self-realization.

Ravi: I would like to add a reference here to the Neti, Neti teaching in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (and elsewhere too). Neti neti means "Not this, not this". The wiki page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neti_net_i, refers to Neti neti as "the method of Vedic analysis of negation" where one negates body, mind, intellect, senses etc. "till nothing remains but the Self" - "the true "I"".

During my younger days when I read the Neti, Neti statement of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I felt that the main point it conveyed was that Brahman was indescribable. Now the understanding is that one subtly analyses one's experiential/existential reality and keeps negating whatever can be negated experientially (subtle experience). E.g. Experiencing that one is not the body and then that one is not the mind and not the intellect. What then remains experientially is awareness alone and that cannot be negated or denied. Further that awareness never changes (changeless "being-ness" or changeless "is-ness") and that is the experience of Brahman, or, at least, partial experience (lesser degree of experience) of Brahman.

Experientially getting deeper into one's reality and negating the mind and intellect can wreck the normal life that one leads. So perhaps this process can be done typically by recluses and not by people leading regular lives. However this process of Ultimate Existential Real Analysis seems unbelievably simple theoretically :-).

Ravi – Overall Notes

The shlokas mentioned in this document and the comments related to it are about the subtle, deep and ultimate truth of existence. Experiencing the "changeless being-ness" or "changeless is-ness" would give paramshanti (deep peace or as the Holy Bible says, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding), fearlessness (e.g. no fear of death) and freedom (from worldly wants/responsibilities/bonds). But the experience of Love does not seem to be mentioned. So the impression I have, right or wrong, is that the vedantic

(upanishadic) path gives the saakshi (witness) experience but not necessarily the experience of Love.

The Karma Kanda (Samhitas and Brahmanas) part of the Vedas revels in the worship and adulation of the Awesome, Almighty and Wonderful God. It is a phenomenal and staggering achievement of Bharat/India that the Vedas have been preserved across millennia and yugas. Perhaps that achievement too is due to the Grace of God. He sees to it that whenever reverence and worship of and faith in the Vedas dips either some Mahapurushas are sent amongst humanity or He Himself comes as the Avatar to restore reverence and worship of and faith in the Veda to its glorious and rightful place. Even today certain mantras from the Karma Kanda of the Vedas like the Gayathri, Purusha suktam, Rudram and Mahamrutyunjaya mantras are revered and devoutly chanted by millions of Bharatiyas/Indians. But once again it perhaps is more awe, reverence, wonder and worship but not so much of Love.

In contrast, the Great Accounts/Histories of the Avatars (e.g. Bhagvat Purana and Ramayana) clearly show the Great Love that Almighty God displays when He comes in human form. Almighty God in human form like Rama or Krishna allows Himself to be bound by the love of His Bhaktas. The Avatars declare and affirm that God is Love and that man can sanctify his human birth by loving God with all his heart and lead a joyous life. The Avatars come for all humanity or, at least, for all the devotees of God, not just for the Vedantic/Upanishadic truth seekers or for the Vedic Karma Kanda worshippers, and show how one can lead regular lives (family lives/material lives) and make that life a great and happy gift of God by

having staunch faith that All is God and Loving All to the extent possible considering one's duties and responsibilities.

Some say that the Upanishadic/Vedantic truth seeker must first go through the Karma Kanda of the Vedas phase and acquire the attitude of intense devotional worship and reverence of Almighty God before he embarks on the Upanishadic/Vedantic phase of spiritual sadhana.

Perhaps the Upanishadic/Vedantic truth seeker can bring in the experience of Love in his/her sadhana by having staunch faith in Almighty God's (avatars') declarations that God/Parabrahman is Love, and do his/her seeking of his/her existential reality with a heart full of Love for Almighty God who is his/her Creator. The Mahavakyas from the Upanishads like 'Tat tvam asi' may perhaps lead the seeker to the goal of realizing that he/she is a part of that same Loving God and is in essence the same Loving God.

Another fascinating aspect of the Vedantic search is the role of faith. Some mystics say that just intense faith in a Mahavakya like 'Tat tvam asi' has the power to confer the experience of 'Tat tvam asi'!! Such kind of intense faith perhaps has the power to tear away and discard all the false notions that the Great Maya of the Lord traps us in (like I am the body or I am the mind or I am so-and-so personality) and thereby grant the direct experience of the "unchanging is-ness" or "unchanging being-ness".

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/ilxjsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2018/04/08/divine-revelation-gems-from-chandogya-upanishad-chapter-6-dialogue-between-uddalaka-and-svetaketu/>

Crisp Statements of Belief in God that is Compatible with Science

First posted on August 28th 2012

Last updated on April 8th 2017

The BioLogos Foundation, <http://biologos.org/>, seems to be a very interesting evangelical Christian community which is ‘committed to exploring and celebrating the compatibility of evolutionary creation and biblical faith, guided by the truth that “all things hold together in Christ.”’

I very much liked the “What We Believe” section of <http://biologos.org/about>. I presume that the views of the BioLogos founder would have had a significant bearing on this section and so I felt it appropriate to give the below information about its founder. However, there are many other distinguished persons associated with BioLogos whose views too would have had a bearing on its “What We Believe” section, I presume.

BioLogos Founder

BioLogos was founded in 2007 by Dr. Francis Collins, <http://biologos.org/blog/author/collins-francis>, who I view as one of the outstanding scientists of our times who seems to have led a balanced life of science and God, and who seems to have made quite some efforts to share his belief with the community at large that Christian faith and science can go together, and has also convincingly refuted claims of some scientists that “in the absence of scientific proof of God’s existence the default answer should be that there is no God”

[1]. Dr. Collins clearly asserts, “But if you are going to try to take the tools of science and disprove God, you are in the wrong territory. Science has to remain silent on the question of anything that falls outside of the natural world.” [1]

Dr. Francis Collins has a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Yale University in 1974, and is also a physician earning his M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) from University of North Carolina in 1977. He followed these degrees with a distinguished research career in genetics. His wiki states “Francis Sellers Collins (born April 14, 1950), is an American physician-geneticist noted for his discoveries of disease genes and his leadership of the Human Genome Project (HGP).” He is currently the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, which “is the leading supporter of biomedical research in the world“. He does not seem to be holding any major position currently in the BioLogos foundation.

He has received many honors including the US National Medal of Science and US Presidential Medal of Freedom. His contributions have also been recognized by the Catholic church with Pope Benedict XVI appointing Collins in 2009 to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

What We Believe Adapted to a Multi-Faith/Universal Faith View

Here, it is appropriate for me to first mention that this blog and I do not have any direct affiliation with The BioLogos Foundation, at the present time or in the past. But I am deeply appreciative of whatever I have examined in the website of The BioLogos Foundation and am thankful to them for their wonderful service to society in promoting faith in Christ that is

compatible with science. I am also thankful to them for having their “What We Believe” section freely accessible on the Internet which enables people like me to consider adapting it, as given below, for a multi-faith/universal faith perspective in a way that carefully respects their copyright.

I am a multi-faith person with a belief that there is one Almighty God which is expressed and/or experienced in sometimes similar and sometimes slightly different ways by believers, followers and teachers of different religions. I believe in the divinity of major figures of many religions and find a lot of commonality in the essence of the teachings of different religions with *Love*, perhaps, being the most powerful common theme of the teachings of most, if not all, religions.

I have made a humble attempt to adapt the “What We Believe” section of BioLogos (<http://biologos.org/about#believe>) to a multi-faith/universal faith view. Due to copyright restrictions I have provided a paraphrased short explanation of the points of the BioLogos, “What We Believe” section referred by their associated numbers, followed by my comment on whether it can be used as is or whether it needs to be adapted. If it needs to be adapted I have humbly suggested the kind of change needed. It is suggested that the points in the sections below be read side by side with the corresponding point in “What We Believe” section of BioLogos (<http://biologos.org/about#believe>).

I realize that I could, of course, be making some mistakes, but I thought it may be an interesting starting point for some people who are very happy with the BioLogos beliefs but

believe not only in the divinity of Jesus Christ but also in the divinity of some other figures of various faiths.

1. This point is about the belief that the Holy Bible is the authoritative word of God. *[Change: This would need to be adapted to refer to an allegorical (as against literal) interpretation of holy scripture of various faiths.]*
2. This point deals with God revealing Himself through nature. *[No change needed. Wonderful view of nature as an expression of God.]*
3. This point deals with belief about all people having sinned and needing to be saved. *[Change: This may not be in line with the beliefs of some faiths.]*
4. This point affirms faith in historical incarnation of Jesus Christ as man and affirms faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. *[Change: This would need to be adapted to refer to historical incarnations of figures from various faiths.]*
5. This point is about belief in a God who is directly involved with and intervenes in human affairs. I think this belief in God who answers prayers is a vital point. *[No change needed.]*
6. This point is about God being involved in natural laws (as creator and sustainer) but also having the ability to work outside natural laws by doing supernatural acts (miracles). *[No change needed.]*
7. This point deals with the belief that science is an important tool for understanding natural laws and that faith in God and science are “mutually hospitable”. *[Change: This would need to be adapted to refer to traditions of other faiths too where*

*“faith and science are mutually hospitable”. The acceptance of science as a reliable tool to “investigate and describe” the natural/material world but the rejection of Scientism is an important part here. The wiki defines Scientism partly as “the view that empirical science constitutes the most authoritative worldview or most valuable part of human learning to the exclusion of other viewpoints” which, IMHO, is a *wrong* and *harmful* view. Some of its supporters go to the extent of making false statements that science has debunked or refuted God and religion.]*

8. This point states the belief that God created universe and life over billions of years. It also clearly states the belief that God is actively involved in the world *now*. *[No change needed.]*

9. This point clearly states that evolution and belief in God can go together but also states the disagreement with the view that “evolution is a purposeless process or that evolution replaces God”. *[No change needed.]*

10. This point deals with the belief that human beings have been created by God as spiritual beings and that God has given human beings an elevated position in creation. *[Change: While most religions do accept that the human being among all forms of life on earth has a larger spiritual role besides the biological role, some religions may not limit the spiritual role to only humans among all forms of life on earth.]*

11. This point deals with belief that conversation among Christians on controversial matters dealing with science and faith can be done in a civil and honest manner. *[Change: This would need to be adapted to refer to other faiths without weakening the stress on the conversation between science and*

faith on controversial issues being conducted in a very civil and honest manner. I would like to state that I have great respect and reverence for many of the organizations representing various religious faiths throughout the world, including the Christian Church (various denominations). The good that they have done, and are currently doing, for humanity, especially the needy – materially needy and/or spiritually needy – sections of humanity, IMHO, is very significant.]

That finishes the points from the BioLogos “What We Believe” section.

I would like to humbly add two points for consideration.

a. We believe that God can be viewed as the embodiment of love and that we should love God with all our heart and all our mind, and that God responds to our love with various expressions of His love. As humans, most, if not all, of us may not be able to really comprehend why a loving God has created pain and suffering in this world but that may be due to our limited understanding and vision.

b. We believe that God ensures that human beings (some faiths include other living beings as well) who do good acts receive good results (benefit) for those acts, and ensures that those who do bad acts receive bad results (suffering) for those acts. The belief about the manner in which the human being (or other living being) gets the benefits or suffering varies across faiths (e.g. in heaven/hell (or equivalent) or in future in this lifetime or, for those faiths which believe in reincarnation, one of the future lifetimes).

Reference

[1] Francis Collins – The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief, Caltech. 2009 – Transcript, <http://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/francis-collins-the-language-of-god-a-scientist-presents-evidence-of-belief-transcript/>.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/xqzdsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/crisp-statements-of-belief-in-god-that-is-compatible-with-science/>

One can be a Rigorous Scientist and a Believer in God – Dr. Francis Collins

First posted on August 11th 2012

Last updated on 15th Nov. 2012

The blog post, short link: <http://tiny.cc/lh0dsy>, long link: <https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/11/one-can-be-a-rigorous-scientist-and-a-believer-in-god-dr-francis-collins/>, corresponding to this article has content of others which I cannot include in this document/book due to possible copyright issues. Readers who would like to read the whole article may please visit the link provided earlier on the Internet.

Given below is my content part of the blog post along with a summary of others' content.

Anti-religion scientists like Richard Dawkins are being given a lot of prominence in the media. Some of these persons have got so carried away with the phenomenal achievements of science and their own intellectual brilliance that they believe and argue that science disproves God. And that God is a Delusion! Further they sometimes question the scientific credibility of any scientist who believes in God!

Such a fanatical atmosphere can scare whatever spiritual leanings young scientists have. Senior scientists and academics have significant amount of influence on the careers of young scientists & academics. If being a believer in God marks one as a not-so-credible scientist to senior scientists then many young scientists will give up their religion or spirituality.

Dr. Francis Collins is among a few leading scientists who are taking on the anti-religion scientists like Dawkins and giving young scientists the courage to be religious as well as be a rigorous scientist. While Dr. Collins is an evangelical Christian I feel many of his views will be extremely helpful for young and old scientists of other religions and sects as well.

Dr. Francis Collins has a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Yale University in 1974, and is also a physician earning his M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1977. He followed these degrees with a distinguished research career in genetics. His Wikipedia page, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Collins, states, “Francis Sellers Collins (born April 14, 1950), is an American physician-geneticist noted for his discoveries of disease genes and his leadership of the Human Genome Project (HGP).” He is currently the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, which “is the leading supporter of biomedical

research in the world“. This Scitable, Nature Education page, <http://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/sequencing-human-genome-the-contributions-of-francis-686>, gives another interesting view of his research contributions.

He has received many honors including the US National Medal of Science in 2008 and US Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2007. His contributions have also been recognized by the Catholic church. His wiki states, “In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI appointed Collins to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences“.

The post, “Francis Collins – The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief – Transcript“,

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/francis-collins-the-language-of-god-a-scientist-presents-evidence-of-belief-transcript/>, provides the text of a brilliant lecture of Dr.

Collins, titled, “Francis Collins – The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief” given at Caltech (California Institute of Technology), USA in 2009. The youtube video link of the lecture is:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGu_VtbpWhE. I have given below a condensed version of the talk focusing on the spiritual/religious angle with a few comments of mine prefixed with iami1. Perhaps some persons may find this condensed version more suitable to read than the whole transcript.

The Veritas Forum, www.veritas.org, has the copyright for the above mentioned lecture of Dr. Collins. They have kindly, over email, provided me permission to transcribe the lecture and use the transcription, including posting it on my blog, provided I don't charge for it or mass-produce it.

--- Rest of Internet blog post snipped due to possible copyright issues ---

To avoid the copyright issue for this book (which may become 'mass-produce'd and sold for an above zero price (even if it is NOT-FOR-PROFIT for the author), and hence not conform to above Veritas Forum stipulation), I have provided a partial summary of part of this post that was snipped due to possible copyright issues. In the partial summary, I have used only a few sentences of Dr. Collins quotes (from the transcript) and so I think that is within USA Copyright Fair Use doctrine/law. On 22nd April 2018 I have also received an email from Veritas Forum that gave me a go-ahead, in response to my email intimating them that I plan to use the summary below in this iami1 blogbook including printed versions of this blogbook.

Partial Summary

In the beginning, Collins gives a quick introduction to the main theme of his talk which is the big questions including perhaps the biggest question of - does God exist? Collins says that he will explain how he changed from being an atheist to becoming a believer in Jesus and a follower of Jesus. And how he sees no conflict between that perspective and that of a rigorous scientist when it comes to views of data related to nature. Collins also says that he sees that "the study of nature is not all there is".

The vital point of the lecture: Does one have to choose between the scientific world view and the spiritual world view? He says that has not been the case for him.

Collins says that the book, 'Mere Christianity' by Oxford scholar C.S. Lewis, had a big impact on him. He saw that his

arguments against faith were rather trivial and that the book convinced him that faith and reason can go together though faith additionally has the component of (divine) revelation.

Collins puts down, what in his view is, some of the evidence for the existence of God:

- * There is something instead of nothing.
- * The unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics (in describing nature).
- * The Big Bang (could be created by some supernatural force).
- * The precise tuning of physical constants in the universe.
- * The moral Law about right and wrong which is felt by human beings in their hearts.

On the moral law, Collins quotes a phrase from Immanuel Kant, the philosopher, 'Two things fill me with constantly increasing admiration and awe, the longer and more earnestly I reflect on them: the starry heavens without and the Moral Law within.' and states that that's where he (Collins) was.

Collins describes how he eventually opened his heart to Jesus Christ and became a Christian thirty one years ago! Collins then discovers and enjoys great peace and joy in having crossed that bridge to faith without giving up on reason. He points out Jesus saying (from Matthew in the New Testament) that the greatest commandment in the Law was: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Collins is exultant that Jesus' response included 'all your mind' and views that as an instruction to use the mind in faith.

Collins gives details of DNA evidence for evolution and then concludes that evolution (theory of Darwin) is correct and that human beings are part of evolution.

Collins then looks at the argument of some people who use evolution "as a club over the head of believers" and mentions Richard Dawkins as the most visible person to do so. He talks about Dawkins' book, 'The God Delusion' where Dawkins has used his gifts as a writer to become a critic of religion going to the extent of saying that it is evil. Collins says that Dawkins writes that religion is responsible for most of the bad things in the world!

Collins says that Dawkins also argues that in "the absence of scientific proof of God's existence the default answer should be that there is no God." Collins states that one problem with such an argument is that it is the assertion of a universal negative. *[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): I didn't understand that initially. According to my understanding of the explanation here, <http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/atheism.htm>, assertion of a universal negative requires one to be all-knowing. In other words, one can assert that there is no God only if one is all-knowing (omniscient), which Dawkins does not claim to be, as far as I know.]*

Collins then says that another problem with the argument is that it is a category error. Science is limited to nature and is really good at commenting on nature. In most religions, God is at least partly outside of nature. The tools of science cannot be used to disprove God as these tools of science have to stay silent on anything outside of natural world. *[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): As simple as that. So claims that science has disproved or will disprove God are delusions.]*

Collins advises against literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. He quotes Saint Augustine, “In matters that are so obscure and far beyond our vision, we find in Holy Scripture passages which can be interpreted in very different ways without prejudice to the faith we have received. In such cases, we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search for truth justly undermines this position, we too fall with it. Saint Augustine, 400 AD, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.”

Collins says that it is troubling to see the stage being occupied by two extremes. One extreme is of atheists arguing science disproves God and the other is of fundamentalists who say science cannot be trusted as it does not fit with their interpretation of scripture verses. But he thinks there is hope of the situation improving through conversation.

He summarizes, “This is the most important question that we started with. Is there a God? My answer to that is yes. I can’t prove it. But I think the evidence is fairly compelling. If this is a question that interests you and you haven’t necessarily spent a lot of time on it, I would encourage you to. It’s probably not one of those you want to put off to the last minute.”

Full post’s short link: <http://tiny.cc/lh0dsy>

Full post’s long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/11/one-can-be-a-rigorous-scientist-and-a-believer-in-god-dr-francis-collins/>

God vs. Science, TIME, Nov. 2006, Dr. Collins – a standard bearer for scientists who believe in God

*First posted on August 9th 2012
Last updated on September 4th 2012*

I was forwarded this article, God vs. Science, TIME, Nov. 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1555132-1,00.html>, by a friend. I find it to be an excellent one, though it is over 5 years back, to get some top-level view of the God vs. Science debate in the USA. Very interestingly the article has some excerpts of a discussion/debate between “God Delusion” top scientist Prof. Richard Dawkins, who also seems to have become the standard bearer of the anti-religion brigade now, and another, perhaps not so well known, but quite distinguished scientist, Dr. Francis Collins. Dr. Collins is a physician-geneticist who led the Human Genome Project and was nominated by US President Barrack Obama to and then unanimously confirmed by the US Senate as Director of the (US) National Institutes of Health in 2009 and, I believe, currently serves in that position. Dr. Collins is also an evangelical Christian.

The article, in its initial part, has an analysis of the “increasing insistence” of the anti-religion position of some scientists. It then refers to “scientism” as a response from the leaders of the religious faithful in this war between anti-religion scientists and religion.

It gives a background of Richard Dawkins and some other anti-religion scientists. They have their theological adversaries but most of whom may not be too much into science. Fascinatingly, for me at least, the article then takes the view of the majority of Americans who want a middle ground where they can have both science and religion. But for that the article needs to balance the tough Dawkins with distinguished scientists who are also deeply religious and may “credibly argue the widespread hope that science and God are in harmony—that, indeed, science is of God”.

This is really great for me ☺. I have the strong belief and not just hope that “science and God are in harmony” and that “science is of God”.

The article mentions a few distinguished scientists who are religious, finally zeroing in on Dr. Francis Collins. Then it gives some extracts of a 90 minute debate TIME magazine arranged between Dawkins and Collins.

A vital part of the debate, for me, is when TIME questions Collins about Resurrection, virgin birth etc. not being in line with science. Collins answers that if one believes that God made the natural laws then God can violate them too. *[Ravi: As simple as that. That is my strong belief too.]*

Richard Dawkins then challenges Collins’ scientific credibility because of his faith! *[Ravi: This is real fanatic stuff from Dawkins. Either you are a scientist or you are a loony-faith guy, there is no middle ground! Seems to me, if Dawkins has his way, anybody believing in any form of God will not be considered a credible/reliable scientist. Horrifying!!!]*

Collins responds calmly. I love his balanced tone and content.
Hats off to Collins!

At the end of the article TIME asks for concluding thoughts. I just loved the concluding thoughts of Collins. To view it, see page 9 of the article and read the top paragraph. I can fully identify with those words of Dr. Collins, though I have been a software-technologist for around a quarter of a century and not a top-scientist like Collins, and though my spiritual belief about the whys may differ in some respects from Dr. Collins' belief. My faith in God does not compromise my ability in any way to think and function as a software-technologist (I am a believer in God for the past 15 to 20 years or so).

Wow!!! It is so great to have a standard bearer like Collins to take on the fanaticism of Dawkins in the rarefied top scientists science-vs-religion war zone. It is almost as if a weight has been lifted off my mind ☺. I mean, one reads so much about Dawkins in the media nowadays and very little about top scientists who challenge him that I was wondering whether any top scientist had stood up and solidly refuted Dawkins. Now that I know that Collins and co. are refuting Dawkins I can easily point young scientists & intellectuals who are getting swayed by Dawkins & co. but have an open mind, to his refuters like Collins.

Thank you so much, TIME magazine, for this wonderful article.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/xvzdsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/god-vs-science-time-nov-2006-dr-collins-a-standard-bearer-for-scientists-who-believe-in-god/>

Some Famous Scientists' Views on God and Limits of Science

*First posted on November 18, 2012
Last updated on December 6th 2013*

Peter Medawar was a Nobel Prize winner (1960) in Physiology and Medicine. The extract below is from his wikipedia page, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Medawar.

Sir Peter was also a realist in pointing out in his book “Advice to a Young Scientist” that there is no quicker way for a scientist to bring discredit on himself and his profession particularly when no declaration is called for, than to declare that science knows or will know the answers to all questions worth asking. Sir Peter added that questions that do not admit a scientific answer should not be assumed to be non-questions. “We must turn to imaginative literature and religion for suitable answers!”

— end wiki extract —

Here are some interesting quotes of Max Planck, from: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Max_Planck

I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.

[Update on 22nd April 2018

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Max_Planck no longer shows the above quote of Max Planck!

But

https://www.endlesssearch.co.uk/science_scientistmystics.htm provides the same quote with the source mentioned as The Observer, London, January 25, 1931.

End-Update 22nd April 2018]

...

Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.
[Source: Where is Science Going? (1932).]

...

As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter. *[Source: Das Wesen der Materie [The Nature of Matter], a 1944 speech in Florence, Italy, Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, Abt. Va, Rep. 11 Planck, Nr. 1797.]*

...

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its

opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it. [*Source: Wissenschaftliche Selbstbiographie. Mit einem Bildnis und der von Max von Laue gehaltenen Traueransprache. Johann Ambrosius Barth Verlag (Leipzig 1948), p. 22, as translated in Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers, trans. F. Gaynor (New York, 1949), pp. 33–34 (as cited in T. S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions).*]

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): I found this very human aspect of scientists quite interesting. Perhaps some scientists get very emotionally attached to ideas & models they have lived with for decades.]

...

Under these conditions it is no wonder, that the movement of atheists, which declares religion to be just a deliberate illusion, invented by power-seeking priests, and which has for the pious belief in a higher Power nothing but words of mockery, eagerly makes use of progressive scientific knowledge and in a presumed unity with it, expands in an ever faster pace its disintegrating action on all nations of the earth and on all social levels. I do not need to explain in any more detail that after its victory not only all the most precious treasures of our culture would vanish, but — which is even worse — also any prospects at a better future. [*Source: Religion und Naturwissenschaft (1958)*]

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): I think the words, “disintegrating action”, of Max Planck written perhaps in the mid-twentieth century apply very well to atheism spreading scientists and

professors of science today in 2013 in countries where faith in God plays a very important integration role.]

—end wikiquotes of Max Planck —

The wikipedia page on Max. Planck, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Planck, has a section on his religious view. The initial part of it shows that he believed in God and respected religion, ‘In a lecture in 1937 entitled “Religion und Naturwissenschaft” he suggested the importance of these symbols and rituals related directly with a believer’s ability to worship God, but that one must be mindful that the symbols provide an imperfect illustration of divinity. He criticized atheism for being focused on the derision of such symbols, while at the same time warned of the over-estimation of the importance of such symbols by believers.’ [Source: *The Life Max Planck. encyclopedia.com. Retrieved on 2012-03-07.*]

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): I think that is a very balanced view. I particularly liked the criticism of atheism being derisive of imperfect symbols of divinity.]

...

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): But Max Planck did not believe in miracles (which would have included the miracles mentioned in the New Testament related to Jesus Christ):]

[From the wikipedia page again] On the other hand, Planck wrote, “...’to believe’ means ‘to recognize as a truth,’ and the knowledge of nature, continually advancing on incontestably safe tracks, has made it utterly impossible for a person possessing some training in natural science to recognize as

founded on truth the many reports of extraordinary occurrences contradicting the laws of nature, of miracles which are still commonly regarded as essential supports and confirmations of religious doctrines, and which formerly used to be accepted as facts pure and simple, without doubt or criticism. The belief in miracles must retreat step by step before relentlessly and reliably progressing science and we cannot doubt that sooner or later it must vanish completely.”

[Source: Max Planck, Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers.]

...

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): And neither did he believe in a personal God, at least later on in life, (I think divine figures with reported paranormal powers like Rama, Krishna, Jesus are considered to be personal Gods):]

[From the wikipedia page again] Later in life, Planck’s views on God were that of a deist. For example, six months before his death a rumour started that Planck had converted to Catholicism, but when questioned what had brought him to make this step, he declared that, although he had always been deeply religious, he did not believe “in a personal God, let alone a Christian God.”

[22nd April 2018 Update: Now the Wiki page shows only the first sentence of above extract. So I have given the fuller extract from the same source.

J. L. Heilbron (1986). *The Dilemmas of an Upright Man: Max Planck and the Fortunes of German Science*. Harvard University Press. p. 198. ISBN 9780674004399. "Six months before his death from a

stroke on 4 October 1947, a rumor started that Planck had converted to Catholicism. An engineer applied to him for the reason that had brought him to such a step. The reply was not useful to missionaries. He had always been deeply religious, Planck said, but he did not believe in "a personal God, let alone a Christian God." A God without qualities, a religion without trappings, life without compartments, knowledge without divisions — in brief, a worldview without extremes — have little appeal to prophets and promoters."

Ravi: I saw the above paragraph on Google Books Preview of the book,
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=d5zKH2Bx2AwC>,
on page 198 on 22nd April 2018. End-Update]

— end wikipedia extracts related to Max Planck —

Schrodinger (1961) claims that the Vedic slogan “All in One and One in All” was an idea that led him to the creation of quantum mechanics. From:
http://www.endlessearch.co.uk/science_scientistmystics.htm.

Albert Einstein has been portrayed by some atheism spreading scientists and others as an atheist. But that seems to be incorrect. Here are relevant extracts from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_views_of_Albert_Einstein.

On 24 April 1929, Einstein cabled Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein in German: “I believe in Spinoza’s God, who reveals himself in the harmony of all that exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind.” [Source:

Isaacson, Walter (2008). Einstein: His Life and Universe. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 388-389. Reported by the New York Times 25 April 1929 under the headline "Einstein believes in 'Spinoza's God'"

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): From this we can conclude that Einstein did not believe in supernatural Divine responses to prayer i.e. an interventionist God.]

...

“I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the type of which we are conscious in ourselves. An individual who should survive his physical death is also beyond my comprehension, nor do I wish it otherwise; such notions are for the fears or absurd egoism of feeble souls. Enough for me the mystery of the eternity of life, and the inkling of the marvelous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavour to comprehend a portion, be it never so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in nature.”

[Source: Einstein, Albert (1999). The World as I See It. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, p. 5.]

[iami1 (Ravi S. Iyer): So Einstein seemed to believe, like Dawkins, that on death it just ends, which goes against the revelations of scripture of many religions and experiences shared by spiritual masters and mystics. Further Einstein did not believe in Karma or equivalent.]

...

Einstein rejected the label atheist, which he associated with certainty regarding God’s nonexistence.

[22nd April 2018 Update: The previous sentence seems to have been removed from the Wiki page. But this sentence has been inserted a few lines lower down: In an interview published by the German poet George Sylvester Viereck, Einstein stated, "I am not an Atheist." [*Source: Viereck, George Sylvester (1930). Glimpses of the Great. New York: The Macaulay Company, pp. 372-373.*] End-Update 22nd April 2018]

Einstein stated: "I have repeatedly said that in my opinion the idea of a personal God is a childlike one. You may call me an agnostic, but I do not share the crusading spirit of the professional atheist whose fervor is mostly due to a painful act of liberation from the fetters of religious indoctrination received in youth. I prefer an attitude of humility corresponding to the weakness of our intellectual understanding of nature and of our own being." [*Source: Gilmore, Michael R. (1997). "Einstein's God: Just What Did Einstein Believe About God?" Skeptic 5 (2): 64; quoting Sept. 28, 1949 letter to Guy Raner Jr.; also July 2, 1945 letter to Guy Raner Jr.*]

...

According to Prince Hubertus, Einstein said, "In view of such harmony in the cosmos which I, with my limited human mind, am able to recognize, there are yet people who say there is no God. But what really makes me angry is that they quote me for the support of such views." [*Source: Clark, Ronald W. (1971). Einstein: The Life and Times. New York: World Publishing Company, p. 425.*]

[iamiI (Ravi S. Iyer): So Einstein seemed to look down upon people who believe in a personal God.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_God states, ‘A personal god is a deity who can be related to as a person instead of as an “impersonal force”, such as the Absolute, “the All”, or the “Ground of Being”.’ So Jesus, Rama, Krishna etc. when looked upon as human beings infused with Divine force/supernatural power would be personal Gods and Einstein looked down upon people who believed in such deities. However he clearly is against any portrayal of him as supporting views that there is no God! Further he clearly recognizes the weakness of his/human “intellectual understanding of nature and our own being”.

*To summarize, Einstein definitely was *not* an atheist, neither was he a believer in an interventionist God or a personal God. But he believed in a God “who reveals himself in the harmony of all that exists”.]*

— end extracts —

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Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/0s0dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/11/18/some-famous-scientists-views-on-god-and-limits-of-science/>

Burden of Proof Argument for Existence of God

First posted on October 29th 2012

Last updated on November 25th 2012

A friend passed on a youtube video link which states that those who claim that a God (with supernatural powers) exists have the burden of proof to support that claim:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KayBys8gaJY>, 11 min, 30 sec.

My take is that “scientific evidence” for existence of Divine power/supernatural power, which is acceptable to the scientific community at large, does not seem to be currently available.

Parapsychology investigations seem to be not treated as “scientific” by the scientific community at large. From the Parapsychology wiki,

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parapsychology>, ‘The Parapsychological Association regards the results of parapsychologists’ experiments as having demonstrated the existence of some forms of psychic abilities, and proponents of parapsychology have seen it as an “embryo science”, a “frontier science of the mind”, and a “frontier discipline for

advancing knowledge”. However, critics state that methodological flaws can explain any apparent experimental successes and the status of parapsychology as a science has been vigorously disputed.’

[23rd April 2018 Update: The above quote is not available on the Wikipedia page now. But the same quote is available here:

<http://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/14443> and the sources it lists for this quote are:

* What is the state-of-the-evidence for psi?, FAQ of the Parapsychological Association. Retrieved: 2009-01-07

* Parapsychology: An Exchange The New York Review of Books, December 18, 1980.

* J. B. Rhine and J. G. Pratt (1957). Parapsychology: Frontier Science of the Mind

* The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870–1939 Journal of the History of Medicine, August 3, 2010.

* Hyman, R.. "Parapsychological research: A tutorial review and critical appraisal".
<http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/Xplore/login.jsp?url=/iel5/5/31362/01457825.pdf?arnumber=1457825>. Retrieved 20 September 2008.

* Flew, Antony (1982). "Parapsychology: Science or Pseudoscience?". In Grim, Patrick. Philosophy of Science and the Occult.

End-Update of 23rd April 2018]

[BTW the Parapsychology wiki is an interesting account of parapsychology efforts and opposition to it.]

So from a regular science point of view it is not known/proven that God/supernatural power exists. Also science cannot state that God/supernatural power does not exist. Only a person who is all knowing can state that God/supernatural power does not exist, and science and scientists do not claim to be all knowing (For more explanation you may want to see Atheism – Strong Atheism section in <http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/atheism.htm>).

However eyewitness accounts of supernatural power, which are acceptable to many people, are certainly available. Accounts of living and recently passed spiritual masters who had supernatural powers are current and so more easy to verify. But some accounts are ancient like New Testament, Hindu Puranas etc.

Some people are extremely fortunate to have seen and experienced a spiritual master's supernatural power directly in which case they have subjective/individual evidence of that master's supernatural power; or they have heard accounts of such evidence from people whom they consider as very trustworthy sources. So they believe in divine power.

For others it is more difficult as it is natural to doubt such powers. They have a much tougher journey down the faith road. Sometimes it is the influence of preachers/spiritual persons/parents who are of strong faith, which plants the seed of faith in them – that Rama existed, that Krishna existed, that Jesus existed, that Prophet Mohammed existed and that the miracles attributed to them in scripture are mostly/completely

true; and that devout prayer to God/divine power gives results even today.

There are scientists and others who consider science to be a wonderful tool to investigate and understand nature but do not consider science to be the only tool to investigate and understand the whole of life. They recognize the tool(s) of religion and/or spirituality to be powerful tool(s) to understand and experience the deep spiritual realities of existence.

But there are also scientists and others who accept only that knowledge which is verified by science as true knowledge. These scientism, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientism>, type of people, IMHO, truly get lost spiritually. Their mind gets conditioned to accept only that knowledge which is accepted by mainstream science and completely reject other sources of knowledge where the standard of proof is lower/different e.g. ancient history, trustworthy eyewitness accounts. Further they may not even accept something that their own inner conscience may prompt! They may doubt it as an imaginary prompting!

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/jk1dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/burden-of-proof-argument-for-existence-of-god/>

Existential Intelligence & Other Human Intelligences

First posted on September 26th 2011

Howard Gardner seems to be famous in the West for identifying various human intelligences,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Gardner. [Note that wikipedia extract from post is omitted from this document]

BTW Gardner is closely associated with Harvard University's Project Zero. "Project Zero's mission is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines, at the individual and institutional levels." Here is the web site:

<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/> with a link on the top related to Gardner winning some "social science" prize.

Here is an account of Gardner's multiple intelligences:

<http://skyview.vansd.org/lshmidt/Projects/The%20Nine%20Types%20of%20Intelligence.htm> [One possible error here is that Existential Intelligence is listed as one type of intelligence whereas the Wiki page states that Gardner is still considering it.]

I find the above account to be easy to relate to and will use its terms below.

Great Spiritual Masters & Holy Scripture say that the highest wisdom is "Atma Vidya" which may correspond to a blend of "Existential Intelligence" as well as "Intrapersonal Intelligence" (Self Intelligence) in Gardner's terminology. But Gardner is not even sure about "Existential Intelligence" ("Big

questions” – Who am I? perhaps) – I mean the wiki page states that he is still considering it.

Perhaps that’s because of lack of exposure to Great Spiritual Masters. In the Ancient and Holy land (Punjabhoomi) of India/Bhaarath Existential Intelligence & Intrapersonal Intelligence is not only accepted as a valid form of intelligence over millennia but also accepted as the highest form of wisdom/intelligence/Jnana by a large majority of the populace.

The scientific temperament has brought great material progress and comfort to mankind. Perhaps due to that, in today’s world logical-mathematical intelligence, which is the key intelligence type for scientific temperament, gets worshiped as the ultimate intelligence type by the vast majority of people! Some think that science alone can explain the mystery of life. Science gets worshiped and the other intelligences, especially the Existential Intelligence and the Intrapersonal Intelligence gets relegated to the background as relatively unimportant intelligences.

About the limits of human (logical-mathematical) intellect, J.B.S Haldane, the British Geneticist and Evolutionary Biologist has said, “My own suspicion is that the Universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.” (Source: Possible Worlds and Other Papers (1927), p. 286, http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/J._B._S._Haldane). IMHO, understanding life in all its bewildering variety, for example, at the biological level, from a ‘material/measurable by senses’ point of view and to the fullest extent is, in all probability, impossible. Further, it seems to me, that ‘measurable by senses/physical devices’ science will NEVER be able to uncover the ultimate existential truth(s) of the

universe. As the universe is queerer than we can suppose. Our human logical-mathematical brains are quite limited, after all.

Great Spiritual Masters & Holy Scripture say that “Atma Vidya” (“Existential Intelligence” & “Intrapersonal Intelligence”, perhaps, to use Gardner’s terms) can reveal our existential mystery and fill us with Love, Joy & Peace. Some Great Masters are also able to “see”, what is perhaps the Greatest Mystery of them all, the Law of Karma. I mean, they are able to “see” a life form’s (e.g. human or animal) past births, its past actions and the fruits/effects of those actions that it has to experience in this or future births. Hindu Scripture has a lot of accounts of Sages (Rishis) having had this capacity/intelligence/wisdom.

Perhaps the wise path is to use logical-mathematical intelligence as a tool, and science & technology as tools, to improve the quality of material life and to make a living as an industry engineer/scientist or an academic scientist. But to also realize that science & technology and logical-mathematical intelligence have its limitations, no matter how impressive they seem, how “essential” they have become to life, and how many masses of people they awe. To increase Love, Joy & Peace in one’s life and to eventually know and experience the existential reality of life it is “Atma Vidya”, the highest type of wisdom/knowledge/intelligence, that has to be studied/cultivated, assimilated and practised.

Above post’s short link: <http://tiny.cc/p02dsy>

Above post’s long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2011/09/26/existential-intelligence-other-human-intelligences/>

Does Presence of Pain and Suffering Imply That There is No God?

First posted on November 18th 2012

One Indian scientist-professor thinks so and has tried to spread that view among the public via a part of a newspaper article. The article argues for inculcating a scientific temper which is fine but goes way beyond the limits of science in its concluding part. The author mentions occurrences of natural calamities like earthquakes in 19th century Europe killing thousands of innocent people, including children which, the author says, convinced many thinking scientists that there is no god.

The author then questions, if there was an almighty god why did he not prevent it. He then states, “The only logical explanation was that there is no god with supernatural powers”, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/lets-ignore-science-at-our-peril/article4017252.ece>, October 21st 2012.

That is a flawed logical conclusion. A correct logical conclusion that can be drawn from the previous statements is that if there was a god with supernatural powers he/it chose not to intervene to prevent the natural calamities.

A further question may be raised as to why did such a god with supernatural powers, if he/it exists, choose not to intervene to prevent the natural calamities. To generalize the question, why does god allow pain and suffering? This is a complex

theological question for which various religions have various answers.

The following are not definitive answers but some possible answers:

- a) Perhaps it is part of the natural rhythm of existence that there is creation and destruction, pleasure and pain, joy and suffering/sorrow. Perhaps we cannot have one without the other.
- b) Perhaps pain and suffering are triggers which make humans seek higher spiritual states beyond mundane material existence where he/she can transcend pain and suffering. Without pain and suffering humans may not have the motivation to seek higher spiritual states of existence.

Lack of a definitive answer to the above question does not lead to a logical conclusion that there is no god with supernatural powers.

What one can logically conclude is that if a god with supernatural powers exists then he/it does not always use his/its powers to prevent pain and suffering from happening. He/it may be using it on some rare occasions to prevent pain and suffering from happening e.g. miracles of such type claimed/reported by sacred scripture of various religions.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/3vydsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/11/18/does-presence-of-pain-and-suffering-imply-that-there-is-no-god/>

Is Believing in a Personal God Childish?

First posted on November 20th 2012

Last updated on November 21st 2012

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_God states, ‘A personal god is a deity who can be related to as a person instead of as an “impersonal force”, such as the Absolute, “the All”, or the “Ground of Being”.’

So Jesus, Rama, Krishna etc. when looked upon as human beings infused with divine force/supernatural power would be personal Gods. Many intellectuals look down upon people who believe in such deities, as childish people. Einstein seemed to hold this view as per a letter of his, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2213513/Albert-Einstein-letter-uses-say-religion-childish-goes-auction-1-85MILLION.html>. Some scientists today are strongly influenced by Einstein’s views and tend to have the same attitude.

Advaita Vedanta has the view that one’s inner self itself is God. But the view that I am God (an all powerful, all knowing being) is so counter to the experience of almost all of humanity that it is not acceptable to most of humanity, even if it were to be the ultimate truth which gets experienced only by the very, very, very rare fully enlightened beings.

In marked contrast, viewing God via an image, or as a divine force enveloping and controlling all of existence, of which we are a small part, to which we can pray to and get strength, and

even have some of our wishes fulfilled is what appeals to most of humanity. Of course, the Abrahamic religions reject image worship but they consider God to be a divine power far greater than themselves (I am of God but not I am God – I think that is their view).

The history of humanity has these very, very powerful divine figures like Krishna, Jesus etc. who exhibited extraordinary powers. People could pray to them/God through them and get their wishes fulfilled! And they pray to them even to this day with some getting the divine response. Further, even in this day and age, some people are hugely fortunate/blessed to have experienced the mind-blowing divine power of living spiritual masters and mystics.

I am of the opinion that it is not childish to view the all encompassing divine power through a personal God like Jesus, Krishna etc. Even for an intellectual it may be far easier to pray to a personal God at times as against praying to a nameless and formless divine power. Some persons may, at different times depending on their state of mind, pray to a personal God like Jesus or Krishna, or to a nameless and formless divine power considered to be either within their own being or outside of their being. In other words they may pray to either the outer God or the inner God depending on their state of mind.

Enlightened spiritual masters tell us that intense prayer has its effect whether the prayer is directed to a personal God or to an impersonal God/divine force. They encourage belief in a personal God for suitably inclined people and forcefully reject notions that such belief is childish or wrong.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/04ydsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/11/20/is-believing-in-a-personal-god-childish/>

Praying Openly While Doing a PhD

*First posted on November 18th 2012
Last updated on November 19th 2012*

Here's an anecdote I was told about.

A student who had done his undergraduate studies (and maybe post-graduate too) in a holistic, spiritual-cum-secular knowledge Indian university was doing his PhD abroad. Every day, when he entered his office / lab in the morning, he used to pray for a few minutes and then start his work. His lab mates had observed him for quite some time and then quizzed him about it as follows:

“You seem to pray every day. What if God does not exist?”

The student replied politely, “If God does not exist, by praying I would have wasted only 5 minutes a day. Whereas if HE did exist, then by not praying at all I would have wasted my entire life!!”

This would be as good an answer as any we might hear!! 😊

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/y8ydsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/11/18/praying-openly-while-doing-a-science-phd/>

Epicurean Paradox – A Hindu Take

First posted on October 23rd 2012

In an email exchange I was referred to the following Epicurean Paradox (from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicurus>):

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

— end Epicurean Paradox —

[23rd April 2018 Update: The above quote is not found now on the Wiki page. But it is found here: <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Epicurus>, as a disputed quote! The source is provided as: chapter 13 (Ioan. Graphei, 1532, p. 494) of the Christian church father's Lactantius's *De Ira Dei* (c. 318). End-update 23rd April 2018]

My take on it is as follows:

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.

My understanding of Hindu philosophy and my belief is that good and evil are two sides of the same coin.

Good and bad/evil actions done by living beings are, at least partly, out of choice. E.g. In one case, jealousy may lead a person to hurt another (bad/evil act) whereas in another case a person may overcome pangs of jealousy and not interfere with the happiness of another (not bad/evil act). Similarly one person may be indifferent to another person's suffering whereas a third person may be moved to help the suffering person (good act).

The good and bad actions living beings do, typically, create Karmic effects which they experience later on in this life or a future life. Prayer to God (Divine Power) may give strength to face the fruits of bad Karma, and, in rare cases, cancel the bad Karma. Also, very importantly, at rare points in human history, intense prayer by devotees of God have led to Avatars take form like the Narasimha Avatar and, in this case, kill the evil doer who was harassing the devotee.

But these are beliefs – I certainly do not have solid historical evidence of Narasimha Avatar which is acceptable to scientists. Puranas and similar scripture of other religions may be viewed as myths by many scientists and I can't really fault them for it ☺.

Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.

He/It lets it happen but is willing to interfere in Karmic law only on intense prayer or something like that.

Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?

At least partially answered in above points.

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?"

He/It is able and willing but only on intense prayer or something like that.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/a82dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/10/23/epicurean-paradox-a-hindu-take/>

What I am Joyful about Being a Hindu

First posted on July 25th 2013

28th July 2013 Update: This article seems to have got pulled off Google search engine results. I presume that is because of certain sentences in it which may have been deemed communally sensitive. My intent is not to increase communal issues but to decrease it and bring more peace and joy ☺. So I have attempted to reduce sensitivity of this article by suitably editing it. I wonder whether Google search engine folks will have this article back in its search results now.

In response to Mr. Ramchandra Guha's, <http://ramachandraguha.in/>, recent article in a mainstream Indian newspaper I had written a mail to him (and the newspaper's Letters section). The following is a slightly edited version of its contents.

I read Mr. Guha's article, "What Hindus can & should be proud of", <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/what-hindus-can-and-should-be-proud-of/article4941930.ece>, in The Hindu dated 23rd July 2013.

I agree with Mr. Guha that the 1971 war victory was achieved by an Indian army consisting of people from various faiths.

I also agree that Babri Masjid demolition is not something which should fill Hindus with pride. Given India's very turbulent history since the Mughal invasion such 'revenge' attitude can create horrific tension and bloodshed as we already have seen. In my humble view, for such centuries old matters, forgive and forget is what the great Hindu saints and Avatars would advise.

Regarding the "story of Hindu pride" part of the article, I agree that Hinduism has had horrific caste prejudice over centuries and the great Hindu reformers mentioned in the article have played a vital role in reducing or removing many of these horrific prejudices. Given the reports of atrocities on Dalits that one reads about, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done on this front.

However the article does not seem to mention saints and mystics of Hinduism or associated with Hindus, who were above such caste and other prejudices. They taught and practiced all embracing forms of Hinduism (and other religions too in some cases) which appeal to Hindus of all castes and many non-Hindus too. I am joyful about being a Hindu due to these masters and I thought I should mention some of them below:

- Meera whose devotion to Krishna won the admiration of Emperor Akbar and may have played a role in Akbar's multi-faith initiatives and tolerance.

- Sant Kabir who was a student of a Hindu master and who taught a wonderful path of love beyond narrow ritualistic boundaries of religion.
- The great Maharashtrian Bhakti saints of Tukaram, Namdev and Eknath as well as the Jnani Gnaneshwar.
- How Hindus accepted the spiritual power and grace of the outwardly dressed Muslim, Shirdi Sai Baba. Fascinatingly, he lived in a then dilapidated Masjid which he named Dwarkamayi – a Hindu name – but would, it is written, frequently refer to Allah (Allah Maalik). I am very joyful about so many Hindus having accepted the teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba, including the simple but very powerful statement, ‘Sabka Maalik Ek’, and the devotion to Shirdi Sai Baba among Hindus being seen in many places across the country today.
- Chaitanya Mahaprabhu showed the joyous path of chanting the name of the Lord and dancing in joy. Today’s worldwide ISKCON movement draws inspiration from that figure.
- The article mentioned Vivekananda but not his master, the great mystic Ramakrishna, who showed the path of Bhakti to so many people and continues to inspire the Ramakrishna mission.

I am not so well versed about South India’s great Hindu saints of the past few centuries. So I will just mention some names: Bhadrachalam Ramdas, Yogi Vemana, Purandara Das, Raghavendra Swami, Annamacharya, Thyagaraja ...

I am particularly joyous about being a Hindu as this religion produced in the recent past, great Advaita masters like Ramana and Nisargadatta.

Please note that I am not mentioning names of contemporary Hindu mystics and spiritual masters to avoid controversies.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/og3dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2013/07/25/what-i-am-joyful-about-being-a-hindu/>

“The God Delusion”. What Does it Really Mean?

*First posted on August 14th 2012
Last updated on August 16th 2012*

“The God Delusion”,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_God_Delusion, by Prof. Richard Dawkins,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dawkins, is a famous book for the anti-religion tribe as well as many open-minded truth-seekers. It is a provocative title which is a complete statement. Considering that the author is a distinguished scientist whose statements carry a lot of “weight” with the public, I am of the opinion that it is fair for me to examine the validity of the title though I have not read the book itself (just had a quick glance at its table of contents and a little bit of its preface). However, I am aware that some may opine that it is not fair for me to comment on the title of the book without reading the book. I beg to respectfully disagree with them.

As a person who has had subjective experience of an interventionist supernatural power (which is commonly referred to as God or Divine power), I had initially thought that the title of the book itself is a falsehood. I planned to write to Prof. Dawkins, via the Contact email id of richarddawkins.net, seeking to know whether he considered the title to be a “scientifically valid” statement. I had thought that if my message did reach him and he deigned to respond, he would have to say no because I presumed that the title meant that he is saying that a supernatural interventionist power is a falsehood i.e. God does not exist or There is no God. As far as

I understand the approach of science, Prof. Dawkins cannot disprove the existence of a supernatural power. BTW I am a computer software-technologist and not a scientist.

But then a correspondent, who kindly engaged with me on this matter over email, rightly pointed out that I should first find out the definitions of the words ‘God’ and ‘delusion’ before I ask Prof. Dawkins the “scientifically valid” question. I thank him for this advice.

By God, in this book-for-the-common-man context, the definition of supernatural creator and (interventionist) overseer/ruler of the universe (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God>, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/god>) seems to be an appropriate one to take, I guess.

While I, not incorrectly, thought delusion to mean false belief, there are multiple definitions which vary in a subtle way. Two of the relevant ones, in my humble opinion, are given below:

1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delusion>: A delusion is a belief held with strong conviction despite superior evidence to the contrary.

2) <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/delusion>: A false opinion or belief.

Let me examine meaning 2 first as that is what I had previously gone by and I think many ‘common’ people (not experts in delusion like psychiatrists) would have gone by the same. By meaning 2, ‘The God Delusion’ can be taken to mean, ‘The false belief in a supernatural power’. The

implication, to my mind, is: ‘The belief in a supernatural power is false’.

People who went by this meaning would have felt that the learned and distinguished scientist, Prof. Dawkins, has *declared* that the belief in God (supernatural power) is false. That may have convinced some of them to go by the authority of the learned and distinguished scientist that Prof. Dawkins is, and give up any faith they had in a supernatural power.

If such an effect has been created by the title of Prof. Dawkins’ book I would like to state that the distinguished physician-geneticist, Dr. Francis Collins, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Collins, has clearly stated in his lecture, organized by Veritas Forum at Caltech in 2009, “The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief”, <http://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/francis-collins-the-language-of-god-a-scientist-presents-evidence-of-belief-transcript/>, that science cannot disprove God. Those readers who felt Dawkins has disproved God can study the lecture of Collins and know that Dawkins has *not* disproved God. So, in my humble analysis, this meaning of the book title, ‘The God Delusion’, which is, ‘The belief in a supernatural power is false’ is itself a falsehood.

Going by meaning 1 of the word, ‘delusion’, ‘The God Delusion’ can mean ‘The belief held with strong conviction in a supernatural power despite superior evidence to the contrary’. The implication, to my mind, is: ‘The belief in a supernatural power is being held (by some/all believers) with strong conviction despite superior evidence to the contrary’.

Perhaps some people have taken this meaning which, I think, is an opinion that the learned and distinguished scientist, Prof. Dawkins, can, in all fairness, profess. He may have presented his case for superior evidence for the absence/non-existence of a supernatural power in his book.

For those people who have had subjective experiences of the intervention of supernatural power, they *know* from experience of the presence of a supernatural power and so don't need to look at logical arguments & evidence for the absence of a supernatural power. But such persons seem to be a very small minority in the world. The rarity of such supernatural experiences makes almost all of those who have not had such experiences and who seem to be the vast majority, to naturally doubt the supernatural experiences of the very small minority.

Further, as far as I know, there does not seem to be any objective, scientific evidence under controlled conditions acceptable to science to prove (have strong scientific evidence) that supernatural events have occurred. So scientists like Dawkins who seem to have not had supernatural experiences themselves, are certainly entitled to entertain doubts about the veracity of subjective supernatural experiences of others. But some other people, including some scientists, who are willing to consider non scientific sources of knowledge like reliable eyewitness accounts, may get convinced of the existence of supernatural power even if they have not had individual experience of supernatural power.

I believe scientists and others consider eyewitness testimony to be a lesser standard of proof than scientific evidence. In some cases, eyewitness testimony may be false. But that does not

mean that all eyewitness testimony is false. In general, there may be some cases where claims of supernatural experiences or miracles are false. But that does not mean that all claims of supernatural experiences or miracles are false.

Those who have not had supernatural experiences and thus lack subjective evidence of supernatural power, and prefer to trust only scientifically proven knowledge, will want to go by objective evidence of the presence of supernatural power or objective evidence of the absence of supernatural power.

Of course, other authors have other opinions on the matter.

Collins, in his book, “The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief”,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Language_of_God:_A_Scientist_Presents_Evidence_for_Belief, seems to be presenting evidence for existence of a supernatural power (I have not read the book yet but have studied his lecture on the same topic).

Collins, in his lecture mentioned above on the same topic, clearly states that he presents evidence but **not** proof for the existence/presence of God. The reader may or may not agree with the opinion espoused by either Dawkins or Collins, on the basis of the evidence but not proof presented in their books and lectures.

I don't know whether Dawkins, when he decided on the title of his book, was aware that some readers of his book title may go by meaning 2 above (‘The belief in a supernatural power is false’). If he did then perhaps it would have been more ethical/truthful of him to have changed the title to something else which did not lend itself to such a meaning which is a falsehood.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/8izdsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/14/the-god-delusion-what-does-it-really-mean/>

Ignorant Prof. Dawkins Declares to CNN that on Death, It Just Ends!

First posted on September 8th 2012

Last updated on September 11th 2012

A correspondent who is a Professor in the US sent me the link to this CNN interview of Prof. Dawkins, <http://lightyears.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/06/dawkins-evolution-is-not-a-controversial-issue/>.

It is nice to note that Dawkins is ensuring that evolution is taught properly in the “Bible Belt” and other parts of the US. The unfortunate aspect of his efforts is that he combines spreading reason and science with an agenda for spreading atheism.

Prof. Dawkins is asked whether on his death, it will just end. His emphatic declaration is, “Of course it just ends. What else could it do? My thoughts, my beliefs, my feelings are all in my brain. My brain is going to rot. So no, there’s no question about that.”

His words, “Of course it just ends” on death, IMHO, show that he is a scientist who has gone wonky and is not a wise man. How can he assert it? Does he really know? It is an unproven

opinion of his – that’s it. To clarify, there may be no question that his brain will rot on his death. But it is not proven by science that his thoughts, beliefs and feelings will all disappear on his death. Spiritual masters and mystics who have spoken out of their experience and not only book-knowledge/intellectual analysis have declared/asserted that the beliefs and feelings do not disappear on death of a body.

An acceptable and sensible answer from Prof. Dawkins would have been that I guess it just ends but I cannot be sure.

The sad thing for me is that most parts of the Western world as well as some parts of the Eastern world are so enamoured of science & technology that most readers of such interviews and many other bookish-knowledge-educated people who have not had any spiritual or religious experiences will take what Dawkins says as the scientism, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientism>, gospel truth and start believing that on death, it just ends!

I feel we have to do our bit by spreading the word to the extent that we can that Dawkins is talking through his hat when he ventures into spiritual territory and that he is an ignorant fool when it comes to spirituality. Please excuse the strong words but I feel it is necessary to counter him using his top-scientist image to push atheism into the minds of young (and old) Westerners (and some Easterners who read his stuff), with the truth. And the truth is that he simply does not know anything for sure about what happens after death like most of us. So he should shut up or say he doesn’t know. Otherwise he has to be branded an ignorant fool on spiritual matters.

From some comments of mine on this post:

[Aug. 2013 comment:] Here's a compelling account of a Glasgow kid remembering a previous life, with well known psychiatrist and reincarnation researcher, Jim B. Tucker of University of Virginia, USA,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_B._Tucker,
<http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/clinical/departments/psychiatry/sections/cspp/dops/staff/jimbio-page>, joining in the investigative journey, "The Boy Who Lived Before – Extraordinary People", [This link does not show the video now] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFHWb7IuPno>, 47 min, 08 sec.

[Aug. 2013 comment:] I watched a fascinating program in 2009 on CNN which dealt with near death experiences and what happens after death. The program was CNN LARRY KING LIVE but moderated by Jeff Probst that day instead of Larry King, titled, "Near Death Experiences Explored" and aired on December 22, 2009 – 21:00 (USA) ET.

The guests on the program were famous people like Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN chief medical correspondent, Dr. Deepak Chopra, famous new age Guru and a medical doctor, Dr. Dinesh D'Souza an author of a book on life after death. Later in the program Dr. Michael Shermer, founding publisher of the Skeptic magazine joins in as well as Prof. Jim Tucker, of University of Virginia, mentioned in earlier comment above. There are some other guests too.

Here's a video snippet,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tFDEaH_klo, 5 min. 54 sec.

The rush transcript of the program is available here:

<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0912/22/lk1.01.htm>
l.

I was riveted to the telly during this program barring a few interrupts at the door. It was an extremely enjoyable and lively show.

An interesting piece of info is that Deepak Chopra mentions in another interview with NBC about Life After Death: [broken link, maybe they removed it from youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnL2mku4OCQ>] “My father died in meditation consciously, closed his eyes and said give everyone my love and that’s how he left – as elegantly as he had lived.” I have heard Chopra say earlier that his father was a doctor who served people lovingly (Jabalpur, India, I think was where his father practiced).

One hears of many spiritual masters deciding their time of exit. I heard about a Tibetan master telling his disciples that the time has come for him to go. He asked lovingly for a cup of chai (tea in Hindi; many tea loving Indians can truly relate to that ☺), had his chai and closed his eyes. That’s it. He was gone or rather had given up his body.

What a mastery over death! What a conquest!

Above post’s short link: <http://tiny.cc/j2zdsy>

Above post’s long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/09/08/ignorant-prof-dawkins-declares-to-cnn-that-on-death-it-just-ends/>

Wrong Science Being Taught in Some Faith Schools

*First posted on August 25th 2012
Last updated on August 27th 2012*

At the time, slightly over a week ago, when I wrote the post, “The God Delusion”. What Does it Really Mean?, I was not well informed about how some schools (some, but not all, faith schools) in the UK and USA teach *wrong* science (I had read a few reports here and there in the past but had not studied the matter carefully).

Later, I studied some of the views expressed by Prof. Dawkins & others including a correspondent who kindly spared his time to share with me how *wrong* science is being taught in some faith schools in the USA and UK. I did some browsing of my own too. Some of these findings are given below.

Prof Dawkins with a British Faith School

From around 6:57 in the video below Prof. Dawkins is with a British faith school. It shows the, in my humble opinion, very odd spectacle of children, the school science teacher and the principal all “believing” evolution to be false since it apparently conflicts with their interpretation of their holy book.

Richard Dawkins: Faith School Menace? (2 of 4),
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B47pptxhgP8&feature=relmfu>

I feel this is **wrong** science being taught in a science class and strongly disapprove of it.

Salt Water and Fresh Water Not Mixing In The Sea

I was quite taken aback when I saw this video where a child says that salty water and fresh water do not mix in the sea, as an aspect of science derived from a holy book, in front of Dawkins and her science teacher,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jlr1PZxFDEA&feature=relmfu>. Now there seems to be some scenarios at estuaries where the body of river water (fresh water) does not easily mix with the body of sea water (salt water), [This link seems to now be broken]

<http://cms.oregon.gov/dsl/ssnerr/docs/efs/efs33mix.pdf>. But if the teaching was that salty water and fresh water always do not mix because there is some barrier between the two then I have to agree with one correspondent's strong words of "misrepresentation of facts, undermining of science, ...".

I believe Prof. Dawkins is of the opinion that holy book interpretations (of various religions) should be reconciled to science. My humble opinion is that well established knowledge ("facts") of science should be seriously considered by religious scholars and spiritual masters who interpret holy books of religions. Theories of science which still have significant room for doubt are a different matter.

Miracles of Religious Figures

Whether a religious figure performed miracles or not is a different matter. That need not be part of a science class but should be part of a Religious Education (R.E.) class, in my humble opinion. Science, as far as I understand it, has not

disproved and cannot disprove that religious figures performed miracles.

One serious disagreement I have with Prof. Dawkins' views is when he states that religious books should be treated as "fiction", implying that the entire books should be treated as "fiction". That is unacceptable to many believers including me. He is free to treat it as fiction but he has no scientific basis or any right to impose his opinion (that the entire content of religious books be treated as "fiction") on the community.

Young Earth Creationism

I am given to understand that some schools in the USA teach children Young Earth Creationism, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Earth_creationism. Given the fact that widespread scientific consensus opposes this theory I am very surprised to note that such theories may currently be taught as science in USA (and UK perhaps). I oppose teaching such theories as science unless these theories gain widespread scientific acceptance.

Recently I saw this video of Mr. Ken Ham lecturing a fairly large audience with many youngsters. "Evolution vs Creation – It is a Fact that the Dinosaurs Lived With Humans – Young Earth Creation", <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5d3AaAL10U>

From 1:28 in the above video, Mr. Ham provides an argument based on a holy book that dinosaurs lived with people. This, according to my understanding of science, is *wrong* science being taught, though this is not in a 'school' environment.

The Creation Museum,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_Museum, is also
promoting *wrong* science, according to my understanding of
science.

Conclusion

I greatly appreciate the efforts of Prof. Dawkins and his
foundation for reason and science to ensure that science is
taught properly in schools in UK and USA, including faith
schools. Where I do differ with Prof. Dawkins is his view of
belief in God being a “delusion”.

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/44zdsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/25/wrong-science-being-taught-in-some-faith-schools/>

Conversation on 'secular parenting' & religion between USA scientist & Indian technologist

Article date: February 5th 2015

Authors: 1) USA Scientist 2) Ravi S. Iyer, software consultant (technologist), Puttaparthi, India

Given below is a slightly edited mail conversation about 'secular parenting' and religion I recently had with a USA based scientist. I thought the conversation may be of interest to some readers and so decided to make a Word/pdf document of it and put it up on my blog (with the approval of the USA based scientist). In this Word/pdf document the deep indentation style is used to replicate the way gmail shows such a conversation that took place over many mail exchanges (with the exception of two quite independent snippets which are provided separately towards the bottom of the document).

It started with a link being passed on to me by the USA scientist (referred to as S from now on) who knew of my interest in ethical and religious topics, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0115-zuckerman-secular-parenting-20150115-story.html> (title, "How secular family values stack up" dated Jan. 14th, 2015).

I (Ravi referred to as R from now on, responded):

R: Very interesting article. I am glad to see such positive results for "secular parenting". [BTW in India, the word

secular is commonly understood to mean equal treatment of all religions, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism_in_India.]

In the article, I was looking for data on the socio-economic profile of the "secular parenting" group as compared to the broad socio-economic profile of the "religious parenting" group in the USA, but I did not come across it. If you happen to come across such data please let me know.

S: In haste. I don't know of such a profile. I assume that people who self-identify as atheists or agnostics will be on average better off and better educated than the average person. My experience (obviously not a statistically significant fact) is that people who are not well off are conventionally religious or conventionally ignoring religion: they are too busy living their lives to give much thought to "abstract" issues that do not affect their daily lives. They go through some conventional average religious attendance mostly for social reasons.

R: In India among Hindus (and may be similar for other religions), I find that yes, of course, the religious gathering place (temple, ashram, devotional meet etc.) as well as religious ritual (at home) provides vital social convention/norms umbrella for the business of life (and death). But it is more than that for many of the faithful - it is a time-tested, generation-tested psychological device that helps them in times of distress as the environment is such that it is OK to be a loser; god accepts losers unlike material society, and prayer gives courage to face challenges of life. This

reinforcement of faith in oneself through prayer to god, many times helps them face their challenges better. In good times, going to temples & other devotional centres for thanksgiving for the good times makes people feel happier as they have shared their happiness with their deity/guru.

S: I find it hard to accept something that makes people accept failure as a positive thing.

I would not refer to basic health, basic nutrition, basic cleanliness, and basic education as "materialism."

R: Well, not at first (failure). But after repeated trying and failing sometimes people lose their mind and do something foolish. Having a temple/ashram to go to as a loser and still be accepted makes them feel human and happy.

I guess here, there is a great gulf between your experience of life and mine. In India, especially rural India almost none of the above are a given for the poor. The state is mostly a failure on these fronts (barring nutrition to some extent) though things have improved over the past few decades. But it is just nowhere near what you would have experienced in the USA. It is heart-breaking to see how tough life is for the very poor in India. And, in this very tough life, I have seen how religion and charitable services by religious institutions, including Christian missionary institutions, give these poor some

hope, some community-bonding, and some basis for continuing with life with some degree of happiness!

S: Grinding poverty was a fact until just over 100 years ago in places such as Scandinavia that are now prosperous (e.g., many people left for places like the US to avoid starvation and to find work). Then people worked hard at eliminating the problems.

R responded: I had thought that would have been the case in many European countries one or two centuries ago. Your comment about Scandinavia 100 years back, and the spectacular progress made, based on hard work, is very useful confirmation for me. Thanks.

S: I have seen the poor itinerant workers in the streets of Indian cities.

S: 95%+ of the US academy of science are atheists or agnostics - hardly a representative group :-)

R: Very interesting. I have the suspicion that the training for scientists is such that it closes the minds of many scientists to phenomena that cannot be measured objectively and easily reproduced. Science tends to become the only source of 'real' knowledge to them.

S: Correct, though I would not describe that as a closed mind. Curiosity is one of the most common traits among scientists.

R: I agree that 'closed mind' is not the right phrase. I need to think about how to express this better. Thanks for pointing it out.

R: It would be very interesting for me to have such figures for top Indian scientists. But then they may not be so willing to come forward with this info. I suspect many of them are kind of closet-believers as they hesitate to openly state their faith in god lest they get attacked by other top scientists as being unscientific.

S: I suspect that in many societies there are many closet non-believers. There are often quite nasty consequences to being known as a non-believer.

R: Hmm. I had not really thought about this aspect. An Indian atheist occasional correspondent always catches me out on not including his group in my mails/posts. My stand is that atheists & agnostics must be treated with dignity and given every freedom to hold such views publicly, and even profess it freely, in India (and elsewhere, though I don't know enough about elsewhere to comment authoritatively).

S: Your policy is enlightened and exactly what I would insist on for believers. It is not the world standard,

though. If you are an atheist in the US and want to be in politics, you have to be "closeted" (there is exactly one open non-believer in the US house and senate).

R: Oh! That is a really powerful indicator of how the power centres (elected by the people) in the USA view atheism & agnosticism. While I knew that most atheist politicians in the USA would not speak openly about their atheism, I did not expect that today there would be ONLY ONE elected member of the USA house and senate who is an OPEN atheist. That really is significant food for thought for me. I am quite sure that many countries in Western Europe would have significantly more elected members of parliament (or equivalent) who are open atheists. Thanks for this info. It is important input to me and tells me that in my writings I should articulate more often my tolerant & respectful stand towards moral and humane atheism & agnosticism. BTW quite a few of the visitors to my Sai Baba related spiritual blog are from the USA (257 USA visits in slightly less than past 30 days according to blogger stats - not much but not insignificant either).

S: In many countries, the protection of minority religions does not extend to people without a religion.

R: Oh Lord! That is certainly not a good state of affairs.

S: Yes, several Southern (US) states still have laws against atheists holding government positions on the books. They are not enforced, and probably couldn't be enforced under US federal laws.

There is a view that "atheists cannot be patriots." There is quite a lot of evidence that atheists are considered inherently unreliable and immoral by the majority in the US (their holy book tells them so, and their clergymen hammer home the point).

E.g., <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/in-atheists-we-distrust/>

R: I read part of the article (plan to read it fully later). I am quite taken aback. I thought such an attitude can be expected in a country like India which surely has to be viewed as one of the strongly religious countries in the world, but somehow I thought that in the materially well-developed USA, people would not automatically have a distrust of

atheists/agnostics. This is important food-for-thought for me. Clergymen hammering home the point that atheists are (supposedly) inherently more unreliable ..., if true, is quite nasty. If true, I deplore such preaching.

R: A few days ago a correspondent (USA based) sent me this article, Will religion ever disappear?, <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20141219-will-religion-ever-disappear>. Some short quotes from it:

Japan, the UK, Canada, South Korea, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, France and Uruguay (where the majority of citizens have European roots) are all places where religion was important just a century or so ago, but that now report some of the lowest belief rates in the world. These countries feature strong educational and social security systems, low inequality and are all relatively wealthy. “Basically, people are less scared about what might befall them,” says Quentin Atkinson, a psychologist at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

S: check out the figures for inequality. The most equal societies on earth (notably the Scandinavian countries) are also the least religious.

...

R: “Very few societies are more religious today than they were 40 or 50 years ago,” Zuckerman says. “The only exception might be Iran,

...

In 2011, for example, a massive earthquake struck Christchurch, New Zealand – a highly secular society. There was a sudden spike of religiosity in the people who experienced that event, but the rest of the country remained as secular as ever.

S: Interesting and unsurprising. When people are subjected to forces beyond their control they act irrationally to gain some hope.

R: Faith is an irrational thing. It is more a call from the emotional & intuitive part of our being than from the thinking part.

R: I think it is when one faces big uncertainties in life - job, health, etc. that most people get some succour from religion/religious groups. In countries like India, the poor and the lower middle class face so many challenges for their very survival that religion can be a blessed relief for them. Of course, many of the well-off too are religious in India but they perhaps can get by without religion too. The poor may become rudderless without religion. Religion gives them strength to get on with life with some level of contentment and happiness.

S: If you can hope of little and nothing in life, a promise of improvement and justice in afterlife (however improbable) become attractive.

R: I think for Hindus, while this justice in afterlife or future in this life is an important part, the contentment that comes with faith allows them to handle difficult times better than if they did not have faith.

S: Maybe.

R: In my considered view, the golden rule (empathetic reciprocity) may work out well in a stable and prosperous society. I am not so sure how well people will accept the golden rule when under significant and long-term financial and other stress. In rural Hindu India, the strong belief about Karma, specifically the belief that an evil act like say grievously injuring somebody or killing somebody will result in a bad karmic reaction which the perpetrator will have to suffer in this life or the next, holds back Hindu believers from considering such actions, unless provoked, at which time they may lose control over themselves.

S: I find that atheists are more concerned with ethics than religious people. Religion offers punishment as an incentive to behave decently, but typically also a mechanism for forgiveness for bad actions. Perversely, such "forgiveness of sins" can be (and are) seen as making bad actions more acceptable.

In contrast, religious people tend to emphasize the social and personal benefits of religion (apologies if I overgeneralize here).

Personally, and like many atheists, I find it really hard to accept benefits from religion when (IMO) they are based on a lie: the existence of supernatural powers. People enjoy and benefit from symbolism and ritual, but must it be based on superstition? (Genuine question, I don't know the answer).

R: Very interesting point. In my case, subjective experiences have convinced me of the existence of supernatural powers - so they are not a lie to me.

S: Understood.

R: But the big problem is that there seems to be some cases of fake claimed supernatural powers in Hindu (society in) India (including cases of self-deception/imagined powers without malicious/harmful intent) due to which the genuine mystical supernatural events in India also get doubted by people at large. (Genuine mystical supernatural events) are found typically by only those who engage in an intense search for it. Another big issue in Hindu India is that the contempt that (atheist-type) scientists have for mystics with claimed supernatural powers is equally reciprocated by genuine mystics with supernatural powers, towards the (atheist-type) scientists. So co-operation between such genuine mystics and scientists to record the truth (about such phenomena) in a controlled environment (for the benefit of other scientists/science) becomes impossible. [BTW I use the term Hindu India as I think I now have some decent idea about Hinduism in India. I am not so knowledgeable about other religions in India and so do not want to comment about them in this regard.]

But even before I began believing in supernatural powers (that happened when I was around 30 years old), the general atmosphere in Hindu India, especially for a Brahmin like me, provided a belief in the Atma (roughly spirit) which survives death (of the body). In

other words, death is not the end of it all - one's being continues on as a deathless spirit. Even among those Hindus who do not believe in reincarnation, some may believe in the deathless spirit.

How did I get this belief even when I felt the supernatural stuff described in Hindu scripture to be too fantastic to be true? As I think about it now, I recall Indian newspapers quoting Bhagavad Gita about the Atma (sometimes in obituary notices/ads), even well educated people talking effusively about Bhagavad Gita as a tremendous philosophy to live by etc. Please note that many of the same well educated people would frown on miracles reported in Hindu scripture. I think I imbibed the same attitude from these sources i.e. belief in a deathless spirit (Atma) which on death either takes on a new body or merges with the divine essence of the universe (formless God). But I did not buy the miracles part of Hindu scripture (interventionist divine power).

I think many well educated Hindus today, including scientists, would have the above attitude.

I think for most Hindus (including me) something intuitive within one's being feels comfortable with/jells with the deathless spirit belief. The thought that on death one's being simply vanishes forever simply does not jell with me on an intuitive/emotional level.

Now, getting to the point of must religion be based on superstition today, my view is that the supernatural is not false. In fact, I do contribute in some small way to spreading faith in the supernatural, as I have

experienced it (subjectively). And as I see preachers of Hinduism and other religions, I find that many of the really inspired preachers seem to have had some such experiences themselves which is what makes them such inspired preachers. So we are dealing with subjective experiences of faith here - not verifiable and easily reproducible scientific fact but not fiction either.

But there seems to be some fake stuff too, going on in the name of religion and the living of some people is tied to it. I am happy that rationalists in India are challenging such stuff, even if they stretch the truth too far at times and are sometimes vicious in their attacks, as that provides some level of control over the fake stuff. Ideally, fake stuff in religion should get exposed so that the real kernel gets seen by people which can then benefit society. I mean, if some genuine mystic shows his/her supernatural power/knowledge on a platform where he/she can be examined by scientific and rational investigators, it can then lead people to be sure about divine judgement (Karma in Hinduism) for the good & bad one does, and divine grace which intervenes in human affairs if earnestly prayed to, which, in turn, may make the world a much better place to live in than it is now.

S: Thanks for trying to explain.

R: If one tries to substitute fear of bad karmic reaction with the golden rule in rural India with its quite high levels of poverty and wealth inequality, I don't think it will be as effective in preventing evil actions.

S: Given hope and a feeling of control of your destiny leaves you more open to arguments about general fairness and the golden rule.

R wrote: BTW ancient Hindu India had its share of non-belief philosophers, e.g. The Charvakas.
From <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/97591/Charvaka>:

Charvaka, also called Lokayata (Sanskrit: “Worldly Ones”), a quasi-philosophical Indian school of materialists who rejected the notion of an afterworld, karma, liberation (moksha), the authority of the sacred scriptures, the Vedas, and the immortality of the self. Of the recognized means of knowledge (pramana), the Charvaka recognized only direct perception (anubhava).

--- end extract ---

And there are celebrated debates of ancient Hindu India between theists & such agnostics.

S responded: That is good to know.

R wrote: I think atheism is a belief system like theism. But agnosticism is not a belief system as it simply does not accept faith in god due to lack of strong/objective evidence.

S: We may be quibbling over the detailed meaning of words. That's not important. I do think, though, that whatever we call it, my world view is primarily based

on positive things rather than on a simple absence of the supernatural. I think that is a key point that is often missed about atheists and agnostics. There are non-religious sources of motivation for constructive work.

R: Agreed.

[A clarification I (Ravi) am adding after the above email conversation was over. It seems to me that in India the meaning of atheism as "the doctrine or belief that there is no God", <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/atheism>, is the more established meaning among people.

I think this meaning of atheism being more established in India could be due to many Indians relating theist to *astika* and atheist to *nastika* terms of Hindu philosophy.

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80stika_and_n%C4%81stika : "In Indian religion and philosophy, people and movements are traditionally classified as *astika* (Sanskrit: ..., lit. "it exists", fig. "orthodox") if they accept the Vedas as revealed scripture and *nastika* (... , lit. "it does not exist", fig. "heterodox") if they do not."

The 'it' in the 'it does not exist' literal meaning, would surely be referring to God/Divine power. So, as far as I know, the established Hindu understanding/interpretation, in earlier ages and today, of the word *nastikas* is that they are the people who are sure (deeply believe) that there is NO God/Divine power. The English word atheism is matched up to the Sanskrit/Hindu *nastika*, and interpreted in the same way.

Perhaps in the Western world, the other meaning of the word, atheism, "disbelief in the existence of a supreme being or beings", <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/atheism>, is preferred by scientists and intellectuals.

From the wiki page, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnosticism>, "In the popular sense of the term, an "agnostic", according to the philosopher William L. Rowe, is someone who neither believes nor disbelieves in the existence of God, while a theist believes that God does exist and an atheist does not believe that God exists."]

[Update on 22nd April 2018. Now <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnosticism>, does not show the above extract! Perhaps the page has been updated. I have given below the relevant extract on the wiki page now.

“In the popular sense, an agnostic is someone who neither believes nor disbelieves in God, whereas an atheist disbelieves in God. In the strict sense, however, agnosticism is the view that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God exists or the belief that God does not exist. In so far as one holds that our beliefs are rational only if they are sufficiently supported by human reason, the person who accepts the philosophical position of agnosticism will hold that neither the belief that God exists nor the belief that God does not exist is rational.”

The Wikipedia page states that the above has been taken from Rowe, William L. (1998). "Agnosticism".

In Edward Craig. Routledge Encyclopedia of
Philosophy. Taylor & Francis. ISBN 978-0-415-07310-
3.

End-Update of 22nd April 2018.]

An update dated 5th February 2015.

An Indian correspondent read the above contents and wrote the following over email (and approved the sharing of it):

Read the conversation with great interest. The politeness and respect both the parties had for each other is extremely commendable.

Liked the way many sentences were formed in the conversation - especially:

R - " the contentment that comes with faith allows them to handle difficult times better than if they did not have faith."

S - " Religion offers punishment as an incentive to behave decently, but typically also a mechanism for forgiveness for bad actions. Perversely, such "forgiveness of sins" can be (and are) seen as making bad actions more acceptable"

--- end correspondent response extract ---

My [Ravi] response on the above:
Thanks for the kind words.

I did not respond to this point of S earlier. I feel it is appropriate to do so now. In Hinduism typically, followers/practitioners are exhorted to behave decently primarily because such actions will please God. Further, good actions are rewarded with good karmic reactions, unless the person does (good) actions with an attitude of having no desire of (good) karmic reactions (Nishkama Karma).

[From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nishkam_Karma:

"Nishkam Karma, or self-less or desireless action is an action performed without any expectation of fruits or results, and the central tenet of Karma Yoga path to Liberation, ..."]

Additionally, Hinduism provides a disincentive for bad actions through punishment via bad karmic reactions.

Regarding forgiveness for bad actions, I think even from a non-religious perspective, genuine heart-felt remorse from the person who committed a bad act is usually a precondition for genuine forgiveness from the persons who suffered from the bad action. Such genuine remorse transforms (in a positive way) the attitude of the person who committed the bad act, and a subsequent act of forgiveness from the victim calms (heals) the mental anguish of the victim as well as the perpetrator.

I think religions too provide a similar mechanism for forgiveness for bad acts/sins. Simply going through the ritual motions of having a bath in a sacred river (e.g. Ganga for Hindus) or the confession ritual for Christians, without genuine remorse, is not considered to be real forgiveness for sins by mature practitioners of Hinduism, and I guess it will be the same for other religions too. So I think only very immature practitioners (and preachers) of religion would see the mechanism for forgiveness for bad actions that religions

provide as something that makes bad actions more acceptable.

--- end Ravi response ---

Ravi: The Hindu, dated Jan. 29th 2015, carried an interesting article about/interview of an Irishman who became a Hindu, Shaunaka Rishi Das, and from 1997, is the director of Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, <http://www.ochs.org.uk/>. Some parts of the article relate to topics covered in the USA scientist's conversation with me. The article is titled, Drawn toward Indian philosophy, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/drawn-toward-indian-philosophy/article6834396.ece>.

A small extract from it:

Is it all right for a scientist to be a believer? Recently, there was a lot of criticism of the chief of the Indian Space Research Organisation for his visit to Tirupati [1]. So should he either have renounced all religious beliefs? Or should he have been a closet Hindu? "Such criticisms are unjustified. And I don't see why anyone should be apologetic about being a theist."

[1.

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tirupati,_Andhra_Pradesh: "Tirupati is a major pilgrimage and cultural city in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. ...Tirupati is famous for Venkateswara Swamy temple dedicated to God Venkateswara, located about 20 kilometres (12 mi) north west of Tirupati in the Tirumala hills at an elevation of 853 metres (2,799 ft). One of the most important pilgrimage centers in the world, the temple draws millions of pilgrims and is the busiest pilgrimage center in the world."]

--- end extract ---

Ravi: I would like to add that no one, whether a scientist or not, (ideally) need be apologetic about being an atheist/agnostic either.

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<https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/conversation-on-secular-parenting-and-religion-between-usa-scientist-and-indian-technologist2.pdf>

Why I shy away from comparisons between Physics theories like Higgs field and deep spiritual philosophy like Vedanta?

First posted on July 27, 2015

Note: I am really out of touch with Quantum Physics and Particle Physics type of stuff though I majored in Physics in college (B.Sc. Physics from Ruia college, Mumbai university) over three decades ago. [I also did about six months of M.Sc. Physics (specializing in Electronics) in Mumbai university, then (1983), before dropping out due to funds problem.]

This is a discussion about the Higgs Field/Higgs Boson and perceived misconceptions about it due to popular explanations given by science writers which when taken in a literal sense and compared with deep spiritual philosophy like Vedanta, may be open to criticism by scientists who choose to find holes in the literal text rather than interpret it more broadly/spiritually.

Both the simple wiki page, https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs_boson, and the regular wiki page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs_boson, confirm that Higgs field gives (many) particles Mass. The simple wiki states, “The Higgs boson (or Higgs particle) is a particle that gives mass to other particles.”

The regular wiki page states:

a) The Higgs mechanism is a mathematical model devised by three groups of researchers in 1964 that explains why and how gauge bosons could still be massive despite their governing symmetry. It showed that the conditions for the symmetry would be ‘broken’ if an unusual type of field happened to exist throughout space, and then the particles would be able to have mass.

b) Some years after the original theory was articulated scientists realised that the same field would also explain, in a different way, why other fundamental constituents of matter (including electrons and quarks) have mass.

Ravi: So a) & b) together would apply to all (other than Higgs boson itself) fundamental constituents of matter (particles), and therefore seems to be consistent with the simple wiki’s statement given above. [I say seems to be, as I really an out of touch with Physics and am on somewhat slippery territory :-). So my logic in this analysis can certainly have some flaws.]

Now, it should be recognized that Higgs boson or field is related to Standard Model in physics. And, from the simple wiki page, “Scientists do not yet know how to combine gravity with the Standard Model.”

[References for above statement in the simple wiki are as follows:

*) Onyisi P. 2012. "Higgs boson FAQ", <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/utatlas/Higgs+boson+FAQ>. University of Texas ATLAS group. Retrieved 2013-01-08.

*) Strassler M. 2012. "The Higgs FAQ 2.0",
<http://profmattstrassler.com/articles-and-posts/the-higgs-particle/the-higgs-faq-2-0/>.
ProfMattStrassler.com. Retrieved 2013-01-08.

*) The Grand Patchwork. quantum excitation,
<http://thegrandpatchwork.com/>.

End-References.]

So even with Higgs boson and field being accepted as proven by mainstream science, gravity is not explained by Standard Model! So that seems to me to be a big hole in the Standard Model theory when trying to use it to explain all phenomena. Further, for accuracy purposes, from the regular wiki page, "As of 2013, scientists are virtually certain that they have confirmed the Higgs boson exists, and therefore that the concept of some type of Higgs field throughout space is proven." So the right term is virtually certain and NOT certain. That indicates there may be some serious naysayers/doubters even now among the scientific community.

Photons are massless. So I guess Higgs field may not have much impact on photons.

After writing most of the above content, I came across this blog post from, presumably, a Physics Professor, Why the Higgs and Gravity are Unrelated,
<http://profmattstrassler.com/2012/10/15/why-the-higgs-and-gravity-are-unrelated/>.

--- extracts of article snipped due to possible copyright issues for this book ---

Ravi: So, I think at least some serious physicists do NOT view Higgs field as a “universal ether” kind-of thing.

A view that Higgs field is like Brahman which projects material world is really tricky (from the viewpoint of literal meaning that some physicists/scientists may choose to take to criticize the statement). Yes, Higgs field gives mass to many particles. But can one extend that to say that Higgs field is like Brahman which projects material world? From a literal meaning point of view, that seems to be quite some stretch. Higgs field seems to have very limited or no relation to photons and does not seem to come into the picture for explaining gravity. Material world needs photons (light consists of it, according to accepted Physics of today, if I am not mistaken), and most of us humans experience gravity all the time. I mean, unless a reputed physicist used the phrase that Higgs field is like Brahman which projects material world, many physicists/scientists will not treat the phrase seriously. I mean, they may treat it as a popular science writer’s over-simplification or extra imagination. Sorry if the words sound harsh, but even if I did not get into a profession related to Physics, the Physics I studied tells me that some physicists/scientists may view it as over-simplification.

BTW the regular wiki page has a DIRECT DISAGREEMENT with the molasses analogy/metaphor mentioned in popular press (See Sarewitz article referencing New York Times article using molasses analogy, <http://www.nature.com/news/sometimes-science-must-give-way-to-religion-1.11244>). It states, “Various analogies have also been invented to describe the Higgs field and boson, including analogies with well-known symmetry breaking

effects such as the rainbow and prism, electric fields, ripples, and resistance of macro objects moving through media, like people moving through crowds or some objects moving through syrup or molasses. However, analogies based on simple resistance to motion are inaccurate as the Higgs field does not work by resisting motion.”

That seems to me to be a strong enough statement not to make serious comparisons between Higgs field and molasses or Hindu scripture, sea of milk (mentioned in Sarewitz article above, but clearly indicating that it is not an accurate characterization and mentioning that it may be as valid (or invalid) an analogy as the molasses one). I mean, those analogies may be fine for casual writing to reach out to lay readers. But it is NOT FINE for serious discussion.

More general discussion about Physics theories and comparison to Vedanta

Now let me stretch my neck out. I think I may open myself up to strong criticism from Physicists who care to read and comment on what I will now say. I think the “holy grail” of Physics, for good part of the 20th century continuing on to today, is a unified field and accompanying unified theory that explains all kinds of forces and all physical phenomena. It was Einstein’s dream and he did not achieve that dream. String theory is said to hold promise as the theory of everything (Physics wise), but I have been hearing about that promise it holds for long, without it having achieved the goal so far.

I don’t think Higgs field even attempts to be that kind of unified field theory. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unified_field_theory, “In

physics, a unified field theory (UFT), occasionally referred to as a uniform field theory, is a type of field theory that allows all that is usually thought of as fundamental forces and elementary particles to be written in terms of a single field. There is no accepted unified field theory, and thus it remains an open line of research. The term was coined by Einstein, who attempted to unify the general theory of relativity with electromagnetism. The “theory of everything” and Grand Unified Theory are closely related to unified field theory, but differ by not requiring the basis of nature to be fields, and often by attempting to explain physical constants of nature.”

[References for above extract from Wikipedia are:

* <https://phys.org/news/2015-11-theory-stumped-einstein-dying-day.html>

* Stephen W. Hawking (28 February 2006). *The Theory of Everything: The Origin and Fate of the Universe*. Phoenix Books; Special Anniv. ISBN 978-1-59777-508-3.

* Ross, G. (1984). *Grand Unified Theories*. Westview Press. ISBN 978-0-8053-6968-7.

End-Wiki-References]

Ravi: Classical physics (also referred to as Newtonian Physics, if I recall correctly), seemed to me to be a pretty meaningful set of theories and also seemed to match with human intuition. Take Newton’s laws of motion, for example. I did not find it counter-intuitive.

But Classical Physics could not explain certain phenomena. Einstein, Heisenberg, Planck, Dirac, Schrodinger etc. (with Bohr joining in, if I am not mistaken) came along and Quantum Physics became the big thing as it could explain some of the hitherto unexplained phenomena. And then we had mind-boggling progress in both science and its applications that made a big impact on the world. So today Quantum Physics is a pillar of Physics, with Classical Physics being an approximation of it.

But Quantum physics has so much of counter-intuitive stuff. Speed of light is constant – that's a postulate (essentially, an assumption), Planck constant with a specific value $(6.62606957(29) \times 10^{-34} \text{ J}\cdot\text{s})$, dual wave-particle nature, a special theory of relativity and a general theory of relativity etc. And then the horrendous Mathematics, Quantum physics involves. It is not elegant stuff, if you ask me. It is nowhere near the elegance of Classical physics.

But Quantum physics explained phenomena that classical physics could not. No matter how inelegant and counter-intuitive it was, no matter how horrendous the Math, Quantum Physics won handsomely at explaining some unexplained matters. So it has become the accepted Physics of our day.

Can the laws of material phenomena be so inelegant? Or has science (and its associated math) not got the right theories yet?

In marked contrast, I have found Hindu scripture (Vedanta, and, in my case, to a lesser extent, Bhagavad Geetha) & mystics' explanations of underlying spiritual rules or laws (like Karma in Hindu, Buddhist & Jain philosophies) and the overall spiritual theory of existence (man being trapped into illusion

due to desires that cloud his inner reality which is a changeless eternal truth, one brahman projecting the entire illusive world, essence of all being the same brahman etc.) to be so elegant and intuitive. I say, intuitive, in that it jells with one's inner being. Something inside says, Yes, that's right when one reads and contemplates on such scripture/philosophy/revelations/teachings.

Today's Physics is nowhere near as elegant and as intuitive as deep spiritual explanations of existence, like in Vedanta (I don't know enough about deep spiritual stuff in other religions/philosophies and so am not mentioning them). So I tend to shy away from comparisons between some (typically inelegant) Physics theory which gains currency/gets validated, and very elegant deep spiritual philosophy like Vedanta.

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<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2015/07/27/why-i-shy-away-from-comparisons-between-physics-theories-like-higgs-field-and-deep-spiritual-philosophy-like-vedanta/>

Has Science Refuted Religion Debate

First posted on August 9th 2012

Last updated on September 6th 2012

This is an epic debate available on youtube, “Has Science Refuted Religion?”,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulykALV2FQ8>, around 2 hours, and held in or around March 2012, it seems.

Caltech Cosmologist Sean Carroll + Skeptic magazine editor-in-chief Michael Shermer are pitted against Conservative author Dinesh D’Souza and MIT physicist Ian Hutchinson.

Dinesh D’Souza, <http://www.dineshdsouza.com/about/>, a Mumbai-born Konkani catholic now settled in the USA and converted to evangelical Christianity, spoke brilliantly in this debate, and, in my opinion, clearly showed that science has **not** refuted religion. He is a New York Times bestselling author and President of The King’s College, a liberal arts college located in New York City.

It seems that Dinesh D’Souza has some rather controversial views on some topics,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinesh_D%27Souza, but most of his views in this debate seemed to make sense to me.

Prof. Ian Hutchinson, <http://www.psfc.mit.edu/~hutch/>, of the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering and Plasma Science and Fusion Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also argued for the side that science has **not** refuted religion. His prepared statements (he read it) were brilliant. His book, “Monopolizing Knowledge” seems to be an interesting one. An interesting quote from the book’s website, <http://monopolizingknowledge.net/>, “Recognizing science’s limitations, and properly identifying what we call nature, liberates both science and non-scientific knowledge.”

I like the differentiation between scientific and non-scientific knowledge.

BTW Prof. Hutchinson is a Christian.

I found Dr. Michael Shermer, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Shermer, Editor-in-chief of Sceptic magazine, to be quite a nice chap in this debate. BTW he has done his PhD in the history of science! That’s very interesting to me. He was a born again Christian in his young age but later turned to agnosticism/skepticism.

Dr. Sean Carroll, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sean_M._Carroll, is a theoretical cosmologist at Caltech. Very smart and gifted speaker.

Comments

iami1 on October 28, 2013 at 3:57 pm said (slightly edited to give link addresses):

Here's an interesting debate on bad of religion vis-a-vis science in a mainstream south Indian newspaper:

*) An article in The Hindu dated September 22nd 2013, focusing on the bad of religion and arguing for a society in the future “in which religion is not an issue”, Let's aim for a post-theistic society (<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/lets-aim-for-a-posttheistic-society/article5154603.ece>). IIRC the author has a PhD in Physics from MIT, USA and is currently a Professor of Physics in the prestigious (for India) science institution, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

*) A response in The Hindu dated October 13th 2013, to the above article, defending religion and arguing for having both science and religion, Blame it on politics, not religion (<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/blame-it-on-politics-not-religion/article5229388.ece>).

Above post's short link: <http://tiny.cc/zr1dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/has-science-refuted-religion-debate/>

Non-Scientific Knowledge Detection Kit – not Baloney Detection Kit!

First posted on August 9th 2012

I read an article of Dr. Michael Shermer of skeptic magazine, “Baloney Detection Kit”, <http://chesler.us/resources/links/Baloney.pdf>.

I also saw a related video on skeptic.com and on youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUB4j0n2UDU>, which has been produced by The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, <http://richarddawkins.net/>.

They seem to be excellent aids to differentiate between scientific knowledge and non-scientific knowledge. It would have been appropriate to refer to it as non-scientific knowledge detection kit. But baloney? So these folks seem to be arrogantly dismissing any non-scientific knowledge as nonsense.

Toward the end of the above mentioned video, Dr. Shermer says, “Then there are things that are almost surely not true – like you know – psychic telepathy where I can read your mind – that sort of thing – those are surely not true. So you get this range of probably true to probably not true.” He contradicts himself by saying something is surely not true and then having a range which excludes surely not true! Okay, I am being nit-picky about his words – but then I think in such a ‘grand’ fake-knowledge detection kit video he/editors should be careful about consistency of his statements.

Some people I know and trust have experienced that their minds could be read by a particular spiritual person – but those experiences are individual subjective experiences. There may be other “gifted” but very, very rare persons who have such mind-reading capability and which has been experienced by some persons. Now those who have experienced such mind-reading cannot prove that experience to others and so don’t expect that strangers, who don’t know about their honesty and integrity, will believe their experience. Their knowledge and

experience in this regard are non-scientific but certainly not baloney 😊.

Jesus Christ, in my opinion, in all probability, performed “miracles”. That is one of the main reasons, perhaps, why His apostles and their descendents/followers became such dedicated followers of Jesus Christ and spread the Christian faith in many, many parts of the world over centuries. Now the miracles of Jesus Christ may fail the “scientific knowledge test” especially from a distance of around 2 millennia but that does not mean it is baloney! Some people could hold a view that the miracles of Jesus Christ are probably not true as they don’t have “scientific evidence”. That seems to be a fair stand to me, even though I do not agree with it as I prefer to give value to historical & literary evidence which can be viewed as “non scientific evidence”. But to say that it is nonsense is being rather illogical, in my opinion.

I hope the skeptic folks do not get offended but since they have used very harsh language I feel I have some license to use similar language. I think these folks are becoming so fanatical about science being the only true way to knowledge, implying any form of and all forms of knowledge, that they can be considered as illogical and against the pursuit of existential truth. Considering the respect that humanity holds for science & technology today, it would be a nice service to humanity if the esteemed scientists in these organizations don’t get carried away and make science “the only true way” religion to all truth and all knowledge of existence.

Above post’s short link: <http://tiny.cc/3e2dsy>

Above post's long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/non-scientific-knowledge-detection-kit-not-baloney-detection-kit/>

Fantastic Espousal of the Good of Religion by Honourable Mr. Tony Blair in Nov. 2010 Debate

First posted on August 9th 2012

A few days ago, I saw this very interesting debate held on 26 Nov. 2010, “Christopher Hitchens vs Tony Blair Debate: Is Religion A Force For Good In The World?”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddsz9XBhrYA>.

I congratulate honourable Mr. Tony Blair for his eloquent espousal of the good of religion in the face of very eloquent criticism of religion. I loved the way Mr. Blair accepted the valid parts of the criticism that the late Mr. Hitchens made but also put forward the good of religion quite powerfully and lovingly.

It was a joy to see such a debate being conducted in a civilized manner ☺. Usually such debates tend to become unsavoury. I congratulate both Mr. Blair and the late Mr. Hitchens for the civilized debate on such a sensitive topic.

A mail correspondent referred me to these reports on the 2010 Blair-Hitchens debate: Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/28/blair-versus-hitchens-debate-religion> and heresy-corner,

<http://heresycorner.blogspot.com/2010/11/blairhitch-verdict.html>.

My views on the debate are somewhat different.

Mr. Blair could be considered the loser judging by count of supporters vs. opponents – yes. Though I don't know whether the numbers changed after the debate. My interest was not really in such counts but in the valid points of the discourse, as I saw it.

Hitchens zeroed in on the known failings of organized religion, especially in the Western world. He slammed the Abrahamic religions from the scriptural authority viewpoint though I don't think the majority of believers of these religions interpret all of scripture literally. Perhaps it was just a debating strategy of his to zero in on this caricature of religious believers as people who interpret all of scripture literally and project it as if all believers are that way.

What I appreciated of Mr. Blair was that he accepted some of the valid points of Hitchens. But he was, at least in my view, able to put forward some important points. From what I recall of the debate, he made the following points that I liked:

- a) The way Hitchens spoke one would think that all religions are pure unadulterated evil! Mr. Blair made the point about a lot of good being done by religions, IMHO, to bring a reality-check into the discourse.
- b) He said that scriptural authority being interpreted literally (for each and every part of scripture) was not what most moderate religious believers approve (including him).

c) Many times it is not religion that is the main issue but politics & social issues that cause conflict. He referred to both the Northern Ireland and the Israel-Palestine problems.

d) He pointed out that removing religion from the picture, if at all that is possible, is no guarantee of such problems disappearing. He gave the example of Hitler and Stalin whose reigns of terror did not have any religious background.

e) He acknowledged that certain wrongs had been issued from the pulpit like in Christian Rwanda problem of Hutu & Tutsi. But he also stated that in the same problem many religious people had defended people of the other tribe and some even lost their lives doing it.

f) He advocated, if I recall correctly, focusing on the common good of religions and encouraging that.

g) He said Darwin and Christian religion can go together.

h) I felt that Mr. Blair presented the sober, moderate religious faithful view, which perhaps is the majority of religious believers in the Western world. He boldly took a stance which may not be supported by some rigid religious believers.

Hitchens was brilliant at his vitriolic criticism of religion. But then I felt he was playing to the gallery by using his brilliant command of the English language, his wit and his book-knowledge about religion (as against experiential-knowledge). He did not really respond, if I recall correctly, to Mr. Blair's moderate religious faithful view. Maybe the structure of the debate was such that you don't try to arrive at a meaningful solution but just attack the other party. So as a debater he

perhaps did an excellent job in ensuring he ‘scored’ over the opponent.

But I felt Mr. Blair was the statesman looking for a solution rather than wanting to simply ‘score’ over his opponent.

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation, <http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/>, seems to be a very interesting organization. It’s website states that it, “Promotes respect and understanding about the world’s religions through education and multi-faith action. We show how faith can be a powerful force for good in the modern world.” I think such an initiative is a wonderful one. I pray to Almighty God to shower His Grace on The Tony Blair Faith Foundation to achieve its above-mentioned goals.

Above post’s short link: <http://tiny.cc/lm2dsy>

Above post’s long link:

<https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/fantastic-espousal-of-the-good-of-religion-by-honourable-mr-tony-blair-in-nov-2010-debate/>

List of some other posts of iami1.wordpress.com

Given below is a list of a few interesting posts from my iami1.wordpress.com blog with their Internet links, which I felt is not appropriate to include in this book due to possible copyright issues. Interested readers may view them on the Internet.

1) Francis Collins – The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief, Caltech. 2009 – Transcript, posted on August 10, 2012.

Short link: <http://tiny.cc/mk0dsy>

Long Link: <https://iami1.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/francis-collins-the-language-of-god-a-scientist-presents-evidence-of-belief-transcript/>

2) Sam Harris vs. Reza Aslan – 2007 Debate on Religion and Reason – Part-transcript, posted on February 6th 2014

Short link: <http://tiny.cc/o20dsy>

Long Link: <https://iami1.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/sam-harris-vs-reza-aslan-2007-debate-on-religion-and-reason-part-transcript/>

3) Deepak Chopra’s One Million Dollar Challenge to the Skeptics to explain the hard problem of consciousness, posted on July 14th 2014, last updated on August 19th 2014

Short link: <http://tiny.cc/990dsy>

Long Link: <https://iami1.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/deepak-chopras-one-million-dollar-challenge-to-the-skeptics-to-explain-the-hard-problem-of-consciousness/>